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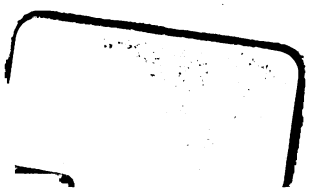

THE MASTER OF RED LEAF:

A Tale.

BY

ELIZABETH AVERY MERIWETHER.

"For my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and to common ears will sound like a fable.

"The world I regard is myself, it is a microcosm of my own soul, that I cast my eye on."—Sir THOMAS BROWNE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE

MASTER OF RED LEAF.

CHAPTER I.

REMORSE.

I THINK it over and over, the dark story of my life, and every thought is a separate torture.

By day and by night, within my unresting brain, goes on the pitiless encounter of argument against argument, *pro* and *con*, the guilt of which I am my own accuser, and over which my own soul sits, a stern and merciless judge.

The faculties of my mind make themselves counsel in the case, take opposite sides, and denounce or defend according to the light in which they view my deeds.

The one side excuses, palliates, and exonerates me from the charge of crime.

The other ruthlessly rips all excuses away, and holds up my sin-scarred life to the whips and scorns of conscience.

By no devices, by no sophistries, by no cunning tricks of argument, can I kill or quiet the remorse that tortures my soul.

The fine poet, sick with some summer day's disappointment, sends forth fanciful wails, evoking the sympathy of the world—the poet prates of his soul "walking in bleak-blown places; full of the sounds of sorrow," his soul withdraws out of sight,

"Far off where the pulse of it is not heard."

What know summer-day poets of a living anguish like mine?—of unextinguishable, unappeasable anguish that gnaws in the heart's core and stings like the bite of serpents?

The poet's soul *seeks* bleak-blown places; for *me* all places on earth are bleak-blown. For me

the sun has lost his light, the heavens their beauty. I feel myself the centre of a vast and illimitable desolation. Though living in a populous city, I am severed from my kind; though in the midst of crowds, I am as solitary as if alone on some barren rock in the ocean, with only the wild waters around me.

Crime has cut me off from all kinship with humanity.

Had I lived on earth ages and ages ago, ere yet our half-formed globe was fitted for the habitation of man, it seems to me my existence would have been no more isolated than now. Oh that such had been my fate: oh that the germ of my mistaken being had found a lodgment on earth in that primeval time when only gigantic beasts were masters of the land, and strange unwieldy creatures moved in the waters; when from the slime of the half-slaked seas huge serpents lifted their slothful heads, and with calm, unwinking eyes, gazed on a world not yet darkened with human woe, not yet dis-

coloured with human blood, not yet stained with human guilt. Less wretched would have been my lot, cast with the soulless monsters of that soulless age—happier, far happier, even though the sound of a human voice never broke upon my ear, even though the dream of a human love never stole upon my heart.

What but the sound of a human voice drove me to destruction? What but the dream of a human love drove me to—crime?

The coil of fate that has wound me in its folds is more cruel than any serpent's coil; fate holds me in a living torture. A serpent's clasp would be sharp and short, and end in death—how sweet were death did I know it to be the dreamless rest the atheist thinks it! *Rest?* after a life like mine! Could death bring it I would fly to his embrace, I would take him to my heart more eagerly than bridegroom lover ever clasped the bride of his love.

But the dread hereafter, the awful never-ending woe to which doomed souls descend—the

dread of that hereafter makes me shudder at the sight of death, makes me shrink back appalled from the grave I know is yawning to receive me.

Since tormented by my sense of guilt, the thought has often come to me, that had I been born and brought up in the Catholic Church its confessional would have afforded me some consolation. How willingly would I kneel at the feet of the sternest priest—how faithfully perform the severest penances, if only in them lay the promise of expiation!

Mine is a harder faith; it holds in its liturgy no praying priest with power of penance and absolution. My more rigid religion bids me take my account to the Almighty Himself, and lay before His awful eyes my most secret sins—sins too black for any power to wash away.

For years I have kept sealed my lips, I have moved on among the multitude silent, yet never for one single instant oblivious of the past. Even in the world of sleep I suffer no reprieve from remorse; my world of sleep is peopled with

the pale faces of the dead—the dead whom death sought through *my* sending.

Oh God! will they never cease to haunt me? Will their wan faces never flee from mine? Will no anguish of remorse, no agony of repentance, purge my soul from the sin I have committed—the evil I have done?

CHAPTER II.

A LOVELESS HOME.

We lived in a small sea-side village in one of the stoniest New England States.

We were a large family, eight in all, father, mother, five girls, and one boy. Our life was spent in the hardest poverty, in the hardest toil. Father was one of those unlucky men, a preacher without a parish, without a congregation. I know not how it happened that so much zeal, so much fervour, did not find constant employment. I do not remember that ever father had a parish, or ever had a call to be the shepherd of a flock. His services were in frequent requisition as assistant at protracted meetings, as exhorter to seekers of religion, and as anti-slavery lecturer. The pay he received for such services was very

little, but it was our all of income. There were three or four acres of ground belonging to the cottage in which we lived, which we worked to its utmost; and the poor crop of peas, potatoes, and turnips it produced went far to feed the family. The spot was stony and barren, but it was better than nothing. Father was a religionist of the strictest type, rigid, full of gloomy fervour, more given to fright his hearers with the horrors of hell than to woo them with the glories of heaven. His frame was angular, his face dark and saturnine; his form and faith were well fitted to each other.

My own mother I remember as a silent, wan woman going quietly about the house, always at work, always with a cross baby. She died when I was eight years old. She had been married thirteen years, and was the mother of three living and three dead children. I have been ever haunted with the idea that my mother was worked to death. I never see a poor overworked dray horse but I think of the many

women in the land who are driven to death just as surely as the dumb beast is driven to death.

I have heard my father eloquently descant on the fate of the Southern slave, toiling under a taskmaster's lash. Poverty is a more inexorable taskmaster than any negro ever lived under; daily did it drive my mother to the drudgery that ended but with her life.

Of my mother's children I was the eldest, Emily was the next, and Abby the youngest. Emily was fair like my mother; I was angular, and dark like our father. Abby was sickly from her birth. The work of the house fell on me. I think I did it well for one of my age, yet it never satisfied my father. He grew more and more moody. He often made long trips to the neighbouring counties; whether he was preaching or not I never knew. He made no companion of his children. If he ever had a tender feeling toward one of us he never made it known.

In just one year after mother's burial, father

brought home a new wife. She was young and pleasant to look at, fair as my own mother had been, with a gentle and grave aspect. She was a poor widow's daughter, one of a houseful of children. I afterward learned that the mother and the mother's neighbours had urged the girl to marry "the minister,"—a minister in their eyes was a superior being.

I shall never forget the pitiful appearance of my father's bride as she cast her eyes around on the home to which he had brought her. It certainly was not inviting or cheering, and she had come from a cheerful, happy household, although a poor one.

My father apologised for the ill-kept house, and told his new wife he should look for something like comfort under *her* management.

Did the thought cross her mind that he had brought her there to serve *his* comfort? I know not; but as she kissed us the tears slid from her eyes. If father saw them, he said nothing. He bade my new mother take off her things,

and bade me show her the kitchen and help to prepare the supper. Twice during the preparation this bride of a day went out on the back steps and gave way to a flood of tears. The second time this occurred, as I heard her sobs, I went to her with an undefined desire of saying something to soothe. As soon as she knew I was at her side, she fled out into the darkness and the night. The snow was deep on the ground. I was awed and astounded by the sight of so much emotion. Quiet endurance had been the extent of my experience. Emily, always more free with father than I was, went to him, as he sat in his little study, and told him his new wife had run away. Startled from his reverie, father strode through the kitchen with a frown on his brow. In a few minutes he came back, his wife with him; her eyes were red, but she went on with the kitchen work until the supper was on the table. Father bade her sit down and eat. She asked to be excused as her head ached wretchedly. The frown deep-

ened on her husband's brow; but she left his presence and went to her chamber. And this was her bridal night.

Marriage has its martyrs, and many have died of it. When the secret history of Woman is written, with all the tortures she has endured, the world will stand aghast at the horrible record.

Our home had never been a cheerful place. Shadows seemed ever to hang over us. Father's presence made the shadows. The sharp glance of his eye kept us in a state of shrinking subjection. If by accident any gleam of childish glee broke from our young lives, father's "Hush!" struck on our ears as sternly as a soldier's "Halt!'

Plants cannot thrive in shadow. Human plants need the light of love, else they grow up dwarfed and crooked. Love is the sunlight of the soul. How cruel the Fate that cuts off this precious sunlight from a child's life!

Rapidly our stepmother settled into the routine of work—the same round my unfortunate

mother had run; and little by little she sank under the influence of the shadow *we* had always felt. Just as my mother had silently gone about the house doing the never-ending house work, so must this woman with the shadow darkening over her young life. At the end of the year came a baby, and of course the work was doubled.

Such was the treadmill life until five more children were born in the house. By this time my stepmother was almost worked down. I was taken from school, and the care of the family rested on me almost entirely.

About this time Mrs. Stowe's famous book came out. It is almost impossible to describe the effect wrought by this book; it was the spark of fire applied to a magazine of powder. Our hatred of slavery and slaveholders had always been hot enough; Mrs. Stowe fanned our hate into a fierce flame. In every blackamoor we saw an Uncle Tom; in every slaveholder, a Legree.

Since I have been old enough to observe the fact, it has struck me as a little singular that Mrs. Stowe should have made the monster *Legree* a native of her own New England. Every Southern slave-owner she pictures as a careless and kind master. Was this due to the fine instinct of genius, which divines truth in spite of prejudice? Did this instinct make Mrs. Stowe avoid the absurdity, the incongruity of creating a *Legree* out of the materials of which Southern *gentlemen* are made? Did it revolt from the impossible picture of painting a *Southern* master who, when a babe, had rested on the bosom of his black nurse—who, when a boy, had hunted and fished with the sons of that nurse—of making such a master torture, kill, and roast his own slaves?

Since my sojourn here in the South for years, among born masters and born slaves, I am forced to conclude it *was* the instinct of a true genius that inspired Mrs. Stowe's pen. Never were truer portraitures of negro character or of South-

ern masters than is found in "Uncle Tom's Cabin;" and never was truer picture of the money-loving, sensual, and superstitious Puritan than the cruel Legree. Uncle Tom himself is the ideal African. In him the moral, mental, and affectional qualities peculiar to the negro find their perfection of development. Faith, patience, humility, reverence, long suffering of wrong, endurance of what *is*, make up the *morale* of Uncle Tom; and these are the traits diffused through negro nature. In Uncle Tom is not found even the germ of those qualities which, in the ideal white man, would preponderate and rule his character. Honour and duty, as understood by Uncle Tom, meant patient submission to the situation in which he found himself. Honour and duty, as understood by the ideal white man, would mean resistance to oppression; would mean freedom or—*death*. The events of the War of Secession prove this. In the elements that make up the two races—black and white—exists this radical difference. How else can be

explained the slave's semi-content with his slave condition? White men in the same condition would have given their masters no peace by day or night.

The slave-masters went to meet the invaders of their land; the black men remained at home tilling the fields, and as humbly obedient to the white women as they had been to their husbands and fathers. In some counties in the Gulf States not thirty white men remained at home; but the slave men were numbered by hundreds or thousands. Had these slaves been of the Caucasian race, and had their masters gone to the front to meet the enemy, who does not know they would have risen and wreaked deeds of blood on the wives and little ones of their oppressors,—would have raised the flag of Freedom, and died in its defence if called on? The more patient black men humbly waited the coming of freedom—freedom brought by the brave army in blue. Unparalleled endurance! Unparalleled forbearance!

Father had always been a fervent preacher of Abolition. Mrs. Stowe's book raised his fervour to a higher heat. From hating the sin slavery, he had come to hate the sinner who held the slave. All the white people in the South came under that category.

Slavery became, as it were, a great invisible demon, which my father was ever making plans to destroy. Though never seen, though thousands of miles distant, this horrible demon was ever present in our home.

If by extra hard work any of us gained a moment's recreation and father happened to see us, he would bid us lose no time, compare *our* happier condition with that of the wretched negroes in the South, toiling under a master's lash.

In our ears for ever would father clank the negro's chain or crack the master's whip.

Alas! what woman does not know, there are slaveries more soul-crushing than the Southern negroes suffered!

My father was in great request as an anti-slavery lecturer. I think he was in correspondence with every Abolition Society in the Union. His manner of speaking was fiery and denunciatory. He made frequent use of Garrison's well-known saying—"THE UNION IS A LEAGUE WITH DEATH, AND A COVENANT WITH HELL." Yet, to perpetuate this same Union, millions of treasure were spent, millions of hearts broken!

Such is the consistency of man.

The more father preached Abolition, the stronger grew his hatred of slaveholders, whom he denominated the "White-handed aristocrats of the South."

The phrase "White-handed aristocrats" greatly intensified our aversion to Southern slaveholders.

When I was about twenty-one, my sisters, Abby and Emily, came home from school. An aunt—a sister of my father, who lived in an adjoining county—had given Emily and Abby a year's board and schooling. Emily possessed some claim to beauty; Abby and myself, none.

Emily was fair and rounded in limb as our mother had been; Abby and I were dark and angular as our father. Father thought of getting me a situation as teacher: he said my two sisters could do the house-work. Before a situation was found an unforeseen occurrence put an end to the scheme. Emily was offered employment by the clergyman who sometimes preached in the village near the school she had attended.

Father said *I* ought to accept, and Emily and Abby remain at home to work. Emily took a bold stand. She told father to his face that she had not the least idea of staying at home; that any place was preferable to home; that home was the most melancholy, miserable spot on earth; that if she did not accept Mr. Jermyn's offer, she would seek some other situation.

We all stood awe-struck at the audacity of such language. Never before had father been so addressed. Poor stepmother turned white, as if some fearful catastrophe were about to overwhelm the family. The long, long years she had

lived under father's selfish rule had completely subdued her soul. Even the wish, the aspiration for freedom was crushed.

There was one member of our family, however, in whom the longing for freedom was strong and keen. Julius, our half-brother—a boy about twelve years old, applauded Emily's courage, and sympathised with her discontent.

It was a curious sight—the unreasoning rage father felt at Emily's opposition, the sense of wrong done him by his daughter. "Disobedience," he said, "was a deadly sin, it was instigated by the Devil. No child of God would disobey a father. Emily was an atheist, and he cast her off as unworthy of Christian society."

It was the first time during his long domestic reign that father's authority had been defied, and it cut him to the soul.

Emily heard his angry outburst with a pale face and a fierce gleam in her eyes, which changed to a contemptuous sneer as he brought his reli-

gion to aid his wrath. Without a word of reply she walked away.

And this was the parting between father and daughter—the final parting. Where was the fault?

Love is the only power that can be relied on to hold human beings one to another. Human laws can no longer do it. Human laws in the past may have held one being in unwilling bondage to another. But the fiat has gone forth. There is a higher law than any man can make, and by virtue of this higher law, enforced bondage is broken.

Father commanded that none of us should speak to Emily until she came to her senses and repented of her wickedness. In spite of this command Julius held long interviews with her, and justified her course. She never "came to her senses," but left the house in which she was born with bitterness in her heart toward father, and love toward none, unless it were Julius.

I went on with the daily work—a dull routine

devoid of one single pleasure. What should *I* know of pleasure? I had been reared to despise pleasures as the devil's devices. From my earliest infancy, I had witnessed no other enjoyments than were to be found in preachings, prayer meetings, and sewing societies. Religious exhilaration was the only sort father thought not sinful. Emily had been gone scarcely a month, when one morning Julius was missing. Father was very strict in requiring early rising. It was Julius' business to rise before light, to make the kitchen fire and the fire in father's room. When I went to the kitchen there was no fire. I knew he had sat up late the night before—I had seen a light in his room—and concluded he was sleeping late; so I made the fire, and proceeded with the breakfast.

It was not long before father came, with a lowering brow, asking for Julius.

"Is he not in his room?"

"No; the lazy lout was sent for, but cannot be found."

In an instant I felt what had happened; but father seemed to have not the least suspicion. Although so recently one child had rebelled and fled, he had no fear that another would follow the example. Tyrants are the most unreasoning of mortals. It never occurred to father to suspect it was his own severity that severed the tie between him and his child. He honestly believed the devil had instigated the girl to rebellion. This belief had rather increased his natural harshness of manner toward his children. Julius, being less subdued than his sisters, more often brought on himself the full measure of father's reproofs.

I went to Julius' room, and there found evidence enough that he had run away. He had made up a bundle of his clothes, had left a short note for his mother, telling her of his love for her, and that he would return when he was a man, and that was all.

Father was the first to read this note; he took it from my hands as I was going to give it to

mother. His face grey ashy, but he made no comment, turned, and went to his study.

Mother was on her couch, as usual, pale, sad, and wretched. Though on the couch, she was propped up, mending her children's clothes. As I entered, she looked inquiringly at me; it was a glance that I have never forgotten. The more I dwell on the expression of her subdued eyes, the suspicion gains strength that she knew of her son's intention to leave.

She read the note without a word. The tears rolled down her faded face; in silence she wiped them; in silence she went on with her sewing.

Marriage has its martyrs, and she was of them.

After this, what little light there had been in mother's life seemed to go out; she grew weaker and weaker. I think, of all her children, Julius was the favourite. He had more of her sweetness of nature, yet something of father's fiery temper. So much of my time was needed to attend mother and Abby, the work of the house proved too heavy for me. The little girls were

going to a day school. Mother suggested to father that I was overworked—that a "help" was needed.

"Help" is the New England term for servant. It was one of father's rooted ideas that to keep servants was a luxury, only indulged in by sinful aristocrats—by the unregenerate slaveholders of the South. "Every family," said he, "should contain within itself all the 'help' it needed. The pious descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers should scorn the luxurious habit of living on the labour of 'helps.'"

I shall always attribute the weakness in my chest to the hard work I did in early life. It never seemed to enter father's head that I could be tired. Often, when the day's drudgery was done, when the thought of rest in bed was like the thought of heaven, Father would insist that I should accompany him to church—a prayer meeting was to be held, or singing was to be practised, or an anti-slavery lecture delivered. His wife was sick, Abby was sick; he thought

it "*would look strange if all the female members of a minister's family should stay away from meetings.*" So, no matter how tired, I had to go.

I think I might sometimes have escaped the church-going business, if father had not been urged on by our old Sunday-school teacher, Mr. Lebanon Long.

Mr. Lebanon Long was a colporteur by profession. He owned a horse and waggon, and made journeys over the neighbouring States, peddling pious books. On the subject of slavery he was even more fanatical than father. He had once made a professional tour through some of the Southern States. The stories he brought back were a marvel to hear. The wealth, the wickedness, the luxury, the laziness, the horrible cruelty of the masters—the Christian meekness of the slaves—were things we never tired of hearing, and Long never tired of telling.

Looking back to that time from my present standpoint—looking by the light the events of the war have cast on the character of white and

black—analyzing the feelings then so strong in the breast of every man and woman in our community—I believe I may say with truth, the bitterest ingredients insidiously stirred into the hatred already seething in our hearts toward white Southerners were the glowing pictures Long drew of the slaveholders' splendour, and comfort, and luxury. Especially did we detest the delicate white hands of the Southern women, unsoiled by honest hard work, as ours; especially did we scorn the Southern gentleman, as Long showed him to us—lazy, cruel, proud, and scornful—despising *us*, the honest men and women of New England. We chafed under the stories of the Southern women's beauty, and splendour, and sloth, compared with our penury, and plainness, and perpetual work. These violent contrasts, so often held up to our view, working on our envy—the meanest quality of the human heart—effectually turned our hatred of the sin, slavery, into hatred of the sinner who owned the slaves. We entirely lost sight of the fact that

our own forefathers were accountable for this sin—that to the energy of England's and of New England's seamen, America owed the introduction of negroes as chattels.

I was in my twenty-second year when John Brown's death inaugurated the war on slavery which was doomed to end it. Our society, as well as many other anti-slavery societies throughout the North, was cognisant of his plans, and fervently prayed that success might attend their execution. At that time Northerners were not so well acquainted with negro nature as now. *Then* we confidently believed negroes ripe for insurrection. We imagined their situation somewhat similar to a powder magazine's, only needing a spark to set the whole body of blacks into a blaze—a great blaze for freedom.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN BROWN, THE MARTYR.

WHEN the time came for the brave old man to begin his perilous work—the hour, as we so sanguinely thought, big with the fate of millions —we held prayer meetings to invoke the blessing of God on the enterprise. Our hearts were filled with a holy fervour. Who could contemplate the expected results, and remain unmoved? —the million tyrants overthrown, the million manacles struck from enslaved hands! With supreme confidence in the justice of God, we awaited reports from the scene of action. Lebanon Long held himself in readiness to go South the moment success was announced. He purposed raising an army of blacks in Virginia, and marching from State to State with the flag

of freedom, until every slave in the South was free, or every master slain.

He had urged me to go with him, to establish negro Sunday-schools. He said it was my mission to teach,—he believed it was New England's mission to teach the Western World, as it was England's to instruct the Eastern. Many sneers have been flung at the sober, earnest women of our section, who take to teaching as instinctively as ducks take to water—who hug more books to their breasts than babies. Alas for the cruel flippancy of men! Know they not that great numbers of women in the New England States are born to a sadder fate than the slaves of the Eastern harems?

The great majority of women over men dooms large numbers to the despised fate of unloved old-maidism.

Barred by men's laws from the thousand paths of ambition open to men, with no prospect of becoming honourable wives and mothers, what can educated women do but become teachers? With nothing

living, or loving, to press to their hearts, let them hold their books, if they fill the loneliness or deaden the ache.

When the first act was over,—when the awful news flashed upon us that John Brown's war was a failure, the prison his fate, that death stared him in the face, the shock was stunning. We refused to believe it. Old grey-haired men, of long-tested piety, rose in meeting and declared it could not be.

"Would God so forsake his faithful people? Would God take sides with the devil himself? Had *He* not said, 'Ask and ye shall receive'? Had we not, on bended knees, and with tears and sobs, asked of God to crown with success the grand enterprise?"

All this was but the delusion of the moment. The dreadful fact could not long be denied.

On the day, nay, the very hour, our holy martyr, John Brown, was suffering under the laws of Virginia, a little band of New England men and women were gathered together in an

old weather-worn church. On bended knees, with sobs and tears, they prayed and made a vow to God.

And their vow was, Never should they cease warfare on the South, until its "proud people are become hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation of the Lord,—until they that did feed delicately are desolate in the street, and they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills."

And, after a long prayer, a fervent brother took up the Biblical chant, "Then," said he, "shall they ravish the women of the land, and the maids in the cities of the South. They shall take the young men to grind, and the children will fall under the wood. The joy of their hearts shall die. Their dance shall be turned into mourning. The crown will fall from their heads. Thus shall it be with the land of the South, for the righteous people of the North hath sworn it. Now, therefore, be ye accursed, and your servants shall have rule over you."

The spirit that animated this meeting in time permeated through the whole North; it fired the heart of the nation; it burned in the breast of every brave boy in blue that marched down to conquer or die. It swept over the doomed South like the simoom's breath, dealing ruin and desolation to the right and to the left.

Many thousand charred chimneys, now standing lone sentinels over the ruins of homes, show how faithfully the work was wrought by the avenging spirit of John Brown.

John Brown's murder cast a dark depression over our people; yet our resolution was unbroken. In the crisis that now arose, Lebanon Long became a prominent worker. But for the influence this man exerted over my thoughts at a critical period of my life, I might not have become the guilty thing I am.

I say *might* not, for I am not sure my deeds were not ordained, even before God spake order from chaos. I am not certain that my sinful soul was not doomed to everlasting woe, ages

and ages before one atom of the matter which now forms the body that encases it floated in space.

Lebanon Long had recently returned from a tour of inspection through Tennessee, Kentucky, and other States in the South-west. His ostensible business had been to peddle cheap Bibles and religious tracts. His real business was to spy out the land, to gain the confidence of the negroes, to scatter sparks that he hoped would eventually kindle a conflagration that would light the world and melt a million manacles.

Strange to say, the material refused to ignite. The blaze never rose, the fire never flamed. The sparks he scattered seemed to die out. Though now and then a black man or woman proved adventurous enough to seek freedom by flight to the free North, by way of the underground railroad, the great body preferred the security of their slave life. Few, none, seemed willing to win liberty at the risk of life.

That the negroes failed to respond to Lebanon

Long's fiery zeal—that they made no effort to cast off the yoke of bondage—that they evinced no desire to rise upon their masters, and wreak a fearful revenge for all wrongs, was attributed by our sorely disappointed people to the strict rule, the sleepless watch, which the white tyrants held over the black slaves.

"The masters," said Lebanon Long, in explanation of his failure to effect an insurrection—"the masters are ever on their guard, armed to the teeth, ready on the slightest sign to shoot or hang or burn an insubordinate slave.

According to Mr. Long's testimony, black men walked in manacles, slept and ate in manacles, and the white men slept and ate and walked and watched armed to the teeth.

We no more doubted Mr. Long's statement than we doubted the Bible itself.

Lebanon Long was more urgent than ever that I should go South, a secret missionary to instruct slaves as to their rights—go as a governess in some planter's family.

At the first suggestion of this idea, I was terrified at the thought of going among the cruel and barbarous Southerners. Mr. Long appealed to my philanthropy, my humanity, above all, to my religion. He painted in glowing colours the great good that would come of my ministry to the downtrodden slave, the souls that I could snatch from the everlasting fire, the numbers panting for liberty I would be able to help to freedom by the underground railway. A meeting of our society was called; it was agreed unanimously that I should be sent as missionary, the society bearing my expenses until such time as I might procure remunerative employment.

It was recommended that I should go to some Southern city, advertise for a situation as governess, and only accept a place in a wealthy planter's family. In that event I would have a thousand opportunities for intercourse with negroes.

The scheme stirred strange feelings in my breast. If there was anything adventurous in

my nature, it had hitherto lain dormant. My days had dragged on their dreary round—joyless, it is true, and with no dream of a brighter life.

The more I dwelt on the idea, the more my ardour grew.

Then came the questions—What will father think of it? How can I be spared from the household work?

As yet Long had not mentioned his plans to father. When I expressed my fears that father would object to giving me up, Mr. Long was astonished at the suggestion. He said he knew my father too well to suppose he would throw impediments in his child's path of usefulness. "*Not spare me from household work?* The idea was preposterous. A common Irish girl, for a few dollars per month, would do all the work I did. I was a woman of talent. I had no right to hide my talent under a bushel, or a cook-stove, or wash-tub. I had attained my majority; it was time I looked to my own duties." Thus talked the man at whose feet I had sat since a child, and

received religious instruction. Yet I felt a secret misgiving that father would object. I well knew I was the mainstay of the house. I well knew even the most competent person could not easily step in and discharge the multifarious duties that daily devolved upon me. An Irish girl, in all probability, would make only confusion and chaos.

At last the subject was broached to father. It met with a stern negative. "The thing was impossible. *Hester could not be spared.* Who would look after the children, wait on Abby, on mother, make and mend, cook and wash for the family?"

It may seem strange, but these words, which I had looked for, stirred within me the spirit of rebellion. It was the first time such a spirit started up in my soul.

I was twenty-two years old. No hired girl working for wages had ever worked as I had for my food and clothes, and now that a new field was opened to my labour, promising something of honour and something of profit, father objected because my absence would *entail the necessity of*

hiring help. A little of Emily's resentment rose in my breast. I quietly told father I had made up my mind to go.

Love, which is the household bond, was too weak in our home to hold its inmates together when interest or favourable opportunity offered a separation. The sons and daughters of loveless homes leave them either with dull indifference or ill-concealed satisfaction. I did, indeed, feel some compunction at quitting my invalid sister and my worn-out stepmother. Between these and myself existed, if not an ardent love, at least the kindliest affection. Lebanon Long kept up my courage and spurred on my ambition. He did not hesitate to say father's opposition to my advancement in life was selfish. He said I had no right to sacrifice my life and my best years to the drudging work a hireling could perform.

Father was gloomily displeased. He informed me he had no money for my outfit, no money for my expenses. I answered I expected none from him. The society had agreed to furnish what

was needful. The ladies of the society held a meeting, a sewing meeting, and decided that my wardrobe should be replenished in a way that would command the respect of the purse-proud, scornful Southerners. A new drab silk was purchased, fitted, and made-up by the society. It was the first silk I had ever had: it was pronounced a model of modest elegance. My last winter's merino was turned and made over, and considered as good as new. My leghorn bonnet, which I had worn for three years, was bleached and trimmed for the fourth time. One of the ladies was so deeply impressed with the superior gentility of leghorn that she congratulated me on its possession. She rejoiced I "*did not have one of those cheap flashy things worn by Southern women!*"

If anything could now make me smile, it would be the remembrance of that wardrobe, gotten up with so much care, and viewed with so much satisfaction and complaisance, as superior to what I would see in the South.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE SOUTH.

AT last I found myself in the land of which we had dreamed, and thought, and talked so much! I went directly to Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, a state nearly in the centre of the great Union. Its central position decided my selection. I took lodging in a cheap boarding-house: the funds I had in hand were too meagre to admit of anything but the most rigid economy. I inserted an advertisement in the daily papers, to the effect, that "a young lady, well educated in the English branches, and with some musical ability, wanted a situation as governess in a Southern family. Salary not so much an object as a pleasant home. Country preferred."

In less than a week I was in communication

with several persons in want of governesses. Among them was a lady from Louisiana, then spending the summer months at Beersheba Springs, in Tennessee. I was wanted to take charge of two children, a boy and a girl, aged eight and ten years.

I might have closed at once with this lady had I been certain she was a slaveholder. As my most important mission was to manipulate negroes, to implant and foster in their breasts a noble yearning for freedom, the principal thing to be observed in getting a situation was that it should place me in a home surrounded by many slaves. True to this design, I declined to make a definite contract with the lady from Louisiana until after a personal interview.

It was two weeks before the interview occurred. At the end of that time a note from Mrs. Devaseur requested me to call and see her at her hotel—the Maxwell House. I put on my drab silk, my leghorn bonnet, a spotless linen collar, a pair of slate-coloured gloves, and walked to

the hotel. I hoped my dress was sufficiently respectable to disarm Southern pride.

I was shown into the parlour. A black boy took my card to the lady. In a few minutes an elderly mulatto woman came in and requested me to go up stairs: her mistress was too unwell to leave her chamber.

The mulatto woman preceded me up the steps; showed me into a darkened room; mentioned me as the "lady who came to teach the children;" took two little ones by the hand, and disappeared. The door closed behind her.

Bearing in mind that I was a missionary to her down-trodden people, I had observed this negress with critical scrutiny. I had heard the children call her "Mammy" with affectionate tones. She presented a picture of contented respectability. A doubt as to her condition rose in my mind. A *slave* could not look as she did. Some happy circumstance had occurred to set her free. Her bearing was as if she were accustomed to deference and respect.

The room was dark. It was a moment or two before my eyes, coming from the bright sunlight, could distinguish any object. From the shadow a voice of singular sweetness greeted me by name.

"Miss Stanhope, please be seated."

Although a chair had been placed for me, I was yet standing; so dim was the light, I did not at first perceive it. I seated myself, and looked in the direction of the voice.

As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkened room, I saw a pale, slender woman half rise from a couch and bend her head to me with a gentle grace and courtesy of manner that seemed of itself a compliment, so much of respect or deference did it appear to indicate. In all my previous life I had witnessed nothing of this nature.

She begged I would excuse her; her health was not good; she was forced to rest before resuming her journey homeward.

It had been arranged in my programme, under the advice of Lebanon Long, that I was to present

to these Southern people a mask of quiet indifference. Carefully concealing my own opinions and purposes, I was to study and penetrate those of the enemy.

Bearing this in mind, I now suppressed all show of scrutiny or curiosity as I looked on the very remarkable lady before me. Though in the autumn of life, though the palor of her face spoke of ill-health and physical pain, though the silvery threads in her crown of fair hair betrayed the treacherous touch of time, her beauty was of an extraordinary character: it must, indeed, have been wonderful in youth.

In our imperfect and half made-up humanity, it is but seldom we find in one person the beauty of external form and feature, the beauty that comes from fine intelligence, and the sweeter beauty that comes from goodness. In Mrs. Devaseur all three were seen in perfection; at least, such was the judgment I then, in that first interview, formed, and I have never changed it. I thought I should never tire of looking at her,

or listening to her. The tones of her voice made a gentle music, and the movements of her body a nameless grace. I learned that she was a widow, and mistress of three large plantations.

I accepted her terms: they were far more liberal than I had hoped for. The salary she offered would have been looked upon almost as a fortune by the women of my native village.

CHAPTER V.

RED LEAF.

WHY the plantation on which Mrs. Devaseur lived was called Red Leaf I never learned. It is said that savages, when for the first time they see the wealth and the luxuries of civilisation, disdain to manifest surprise or curiosity. Perhaps it was something of the savage's pride that prevented any exhibition on my part of interest in the history or surroundings of Red Leaf.

I studied to bear myself as if from infancy accustomed to the comfort and beauty by which I suddenly found myself environed. If I wanted water, I rang a bell and a slave brought it. With my active habits, it would have been more natural to have helped myself. If my handkerchief fell,

I waited for a servant to pick it up, though my first impulse was to stoop to get it.

Constantly on the watch, constantly holding my habits in check, I soon acquired the quiet manners of those around me. Whether this produced the impression I hoped for—viz., that I had been accustomed to being attended by servants—I never learned.

From the very first, Mrs. Devaseur was as uniformly courteous and the house negroes as uniformly polite to me as if I had been a daughter of their own haughty slaveocracy.

The Red Leaf mansion was situated on a rising ground not more than a quarter of a mile from the banks of the muddy Mississippi, in what is called in that region "The Coast." The lawn sloped from the house to the river side. It was shaded by magnificent trees of tropical growth. The magnolia, the *gloria mundi*, the myrtle, the water oak, all more or less draped with the parasitic greyish moss, which, when festooned on trees denuded of summer foliage, always gives

them a funereal appearance, as if they were wearing weeds for some sad bereavement.

The Red Leaf mansion was large and rambling. On every side were verandahs, and vines, and flowers, and birds; but the birds were not in cages,—they made their nests, and laid their eggs, and reared their callow young, in bush, or vine, or bough, unmolested. All day long they sang, or twittered, or hummed to suit their own sweet fancy. It was like a dream of Paradise to sit by my window, or to lie with my head near it on starlit nights, and listen to the songs of the birds and smell the odours of the flowers.

Mrs. Devaseur and her two children, my pupils, Edgar and Annie, were the only white persons save myself in the house. The blacks were numerous.

Philip was the head man of the establishment; he was butler and dining-room waiter—a tall, brown-skinned negro, with an appearance of solemn self-importance and dignity. "Mammy Milly" was housekeeper, and ranked first in her

mistress's affections. Rosa was coal black, with sly, almond-shaped eyes, heavy lids and lashes, and as vain of her personal appearance as if her skin had been like Parian marble; Rosa was the maid who attended my chamber. The cook, the cook's assistant, the gardener, and the coachman all ranked as house servants, in contradistinction to the plantation hands—as they were termed—which means the negroes who worked in the field.

The plantation hands were wholly under the government of the overseer, a white man whom I met occasionally in my rambles over the place. The plantation fields were in the rear of the house, and extended down the river side. The negro cabins were mostly situated on a small stream, or, rather, an inlet of the river. They made quite a little village, with wide streets between the rows of houses, one cistern serving two families. Each cabin had a piece of ground in front and in the rear, in which potatoes, peas, and cabbages were raised for their own private

use. Fowls fluttered about in abundance—ducks and chickens—the sale of which supplied them with pocket money. I was told the negroes belonging to Red Leaf numbered, big and little, over three hundred.

Centrally situated among these negro cabins—all of one size and sameness of aspect—was a house much larger, and more pretentious in appearance. The grounds were more spacious, and more ornamented with shrubbery. White children played on the porch in front of the house, and I saw a white woman's face at the window. This was the overseer's wife, and this was the overseer's house.

The person that occupied this position was a native of the North-west—Indiana, I think—but so thoroughly Southernised as to oppose the abolition of slavery as hotly as any born slave-master. His name was Wiggin—a small-framed man, ill-educated, but possessed of strong will and the natural power of command.

No contrast could be stronger than that be-

tween the home I had left and the home I was now in.

Not only was this Southern home more affluent, more poetic, more beautiful in its aspect than the one I had left in the bleak North—not only was the physical air that surrounded it more soft, more balmy, but there seemed to be a sweeter, a softer, moral atmosphere. No; *moral* is not the word I should use. There seemed more harmony, more love in the air. I say *seemed*, for from the first I felt a secret suspicion that all was not as fair as the outside showed—that, sooner or later, I would discover a skeleton in a closet.

Yet oh! how lovely it was! how like a dream of paradise, the *poésie* of Red Leaf! In the place of discord was harmony; in the place of poverty was plenty; in the place of everlasting toil, pleasant exercise. The workers were so many, that work was play. The day's routine of business ran as smooth as fine machinery when every hinge and groove is oiled.

The servants about the house were quiet and well-bred, and as attentive to *me*, the poor teacher, as they could have been to any rich visitor.

It was more like a dream than reality this ideal loveliness of life.

Yet, in spite of the loveliness, I waited and watched for the skeleton I suspected was hidden in a closet. In search of this skeleton I made social advances to the black girl Rosa. I strove to win her confidence. I subtly strove to stir in her mind a sense of her degraded position as a slave. She listened, but made no comment. The sly glances she sometimes sent at me from the corners of her dead black eyes perplexed and puzzled me. Did they indicate suspicion of *me* because I was "*dat ar Novern voman*"? or did they indicate that she had much to tell if she only durst speak out?

Philip, the butler, and Mammy Milly, the house-keeper, were encased in a mail of dignity. I felt that they secretly despised me, notwithstanding their uniform politeness. I instinctively

shunned those two, believing the luxuries they lived in, the favour they enjoyed in their rich mistress's home, had destroyed in their breasts every vestige of the desire for freedom so natural to humanity.

The two children, my pupils, were docile enough. They gave me no trouble. For the first time in my life I had leisure to do or not do as I pleased. For some hours of each day I had my time all to myself; nothing was required of me. I could read, walk, ride, or idly dream as the fancy impelled me. A horse was placed at my service; but I had never mounted one, and dreaded the exposure of my ignorance of the accomplishment. A light carriage was offered me. The children were not fond of carriage exercise; and, if I went alone, the presence of the solemn man driving made me feel uncomfortable.

Negroes have a fashion, when talking among themselves, of using such phrases as "*po' white trash*," "*fust quality folks*," in reference to the

rich and poor. I never could divest myself of the feeling that *I* was ranked among the "po' white trash." I closely watched the manners of these slaves. I compared their service to *me* and to those whom they pronounced "*fust* quality," and unmistakeably observed a difference. Not that there was any lack of duty to me to complain of; but there was nothing *but* duty toward me. Toward what they called "*fust quality*" was something more,—was a something that seemed to sweeten, to lighten, to brighten duty. In short, I observed, whenever they approached one of these born masters or mistresses there was a genial, friendly expression of countenance, as if the services offered were offered from affection. When they approached me there was no benignance in the eye, no interest in the voice, no small words indicating long acquaintance; everything was formal, sedate, polite, never cordial. In vain I made advances, in vain I endeavoured to break the subtle barriers that kept us apart.

It was this feeling I found, or fancied I found, to exist in the servants of Red Leaf, that made me shrink from receiving their services. It was this that prevented me from enjoying the drives along the banks of the river. Could the carriage have gone of itself, or could an automaton have guided it, nothing could have afforded me more pleasure than those long quiet drives, with nothing to do but muse and gaze on the water, the woods, and the sky. But to see a sedate, black-visaged man always in front of you; to have him sit there silent and solemn, studiously polite, and to feel morally sure, because he is the slave of a wealthy woman, he looks down on you as "po' white trash;" to suspect that he goes home and laughs among the maids and men of his own colour about that "po' Novern 'oman who never before in all her born life had no carriage to ride in, and dat's why she so fond o' ridin' in mistess' now." So with true New England independence I refused the carriage exercise, and avowed myself more fond of walking.

But of all employments for my leisure hours reading became the most engrossing. The Red Leaf library was large. It contained not only all the best standard works, but many rare old books of whose existence I had never before heard.

My father's library held little else than religious literature. The Bible, a few collections of sermons, and controversial discussions, filled his few shelves. I had heard of Shakespeare as an author to be shunned, as leading to vanity and the wickedness of theatres. I had heard of Byron as without doubt the son of Satan, who had ably written in his father's interest; but, until I looked in the Red Leaf library, had never seen a volume of either one of these immortal authors.

To read them, to see with *their* eyes, to feel with *their* feelings, was like entering on a new life, was like becoming a new creature, was like learning to soar through empyrean space. I did not read, I devoured with an insatiable hunger —a hunger that grew with what it fed on.

My past life, with all its harsh realities, faded away into the long ago. The winter was gone; I lived in the softest summer air. For the first time in my life I wandered in the enchanted land of the poets. What draughts I drank from the bright streams flowing through those ideal lands!

Ah, heaven! words cannot express the strange sweetness of that summer time! What deeds of valour! what rapture of love I dared to read of, to dream of! Yet I was in my twenty-third year! And all those twenty-three years had been spent in such drudgery as slaves delve in!

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASTER OF RED LEAF.

I HAVE not yet spoken of this master. As one suffering with an incurable wound shrinks and shivers as the surgeon's hand comes near the core, so shrink I and shiver as the period approaches when this master crossed my path; or, should I say, the time when, like a baleful thing, *I* entered *his* higher, purer orbit, bringing in my train ruin, darkness, and death?

I knew from the first there was a master of Red Leaf. Mrs. Devaseur had told me her eldest son was in Europe; but not from his mother did I learn to think of him as the "*master*" of the place. It was the title the negroes gave him. "The Master" was ever in their thoughts, ever on their tongues. They seemed to look forward

to his coming as though he held in his hands, ready to scatter over them, all the blessings of heaven.

I had been six months breathing the soft air of the South, six months wandering in the enchanted world of romance, six months dreaming dreams never dreamed before, ere I first beheld with my mortal eyes the *Master of Red Leaf.*

I say with my mortal eyes, for ever have I been haunted with the vague impression that I had known him in a former and fairer existence, that *once* I had stood before him, face to face, stature to stature, in physical and spiritual beauty his equal, his mate, his compeer.

Not as *now*, in *this* miserable life, a mite before a man of lordly proportions; not as now, the creature half made-up, warped and awry by reason of moral, mental, and physical starvation, before a being, rounded, symmetrical, perfect in every part, as if fresh from the fashioning hands of a beneficent Creator.

If this haunting thought were true; if, indeed, in some former time my life had been on the same plane with his—Ah, heaven! for what sin had I been thrown down? for what dreadful crime so dwarfed, and shrunk, and cursed, and sent on earth to meet *him* once more?

One evening, towards the set of sun, that pleasantest hour of the summer day, the two children and I were strolling adown the river side—the old sullen river! I had a book with me. If the children loitered on the way, or stopped to gather bunches of wild violets, to fight puny battles with their blue heads by hitching them together and snapping asunder their slender necks, as is the wont with Southern children, I would seize the moment to rest on a fallen log, or at the root of a tree, and go on with the story.

I well remember that story: it was entitled, "*Elective Affinities*," by the greatest of German authors—a story that strikes the opinions most deeply rooted in man, whether savage or civilized

Though, from my Puritan standpoint, the principal characters in the story appeared guilty of an unpardonable sin in loving illegally as they did, I could not help being deeply interested in their unhappy fate, and eagerly read on to the end.

A cry from the children caused me to raise my eyes from the page. They were watching a steamboat coming up the river. Steamboats were a very common sight, but Edgar imagined he saw his brother on the deck. As we stood gazing on the boat, and the group of men on the deck, we became conscious of being ourselves objects of attention. One of the group seemed to be looking at us through a field-glass. A moment after a skiff was lowered from the vessel's side; the man with the glass sprang in, and pulled to shore. He landed just below where we stood, drove his oar in the sand, fastened the little boat to it, and came direct to us.

The children rushed to embrace him. He was their brother Lynn, the Master of Red Leaf.

As for me, how shall I speak of him? Lynn Devaseur! To whom liken him, living or dead?

It is possible, indeed probable, there have been, and yet are, men his superiors, mentally and physically; but, to me, had he descended from the heaven above, he could have appeared no more gracious and god-like.

And you, oh! *you*—the proud and beautiful of my sex! You who are regnant queens by the divine birthright of Beauty—I well know, only sneers and derision *your* hearts will harbour for the woman who loves unwooed, for the weak woman who is tortured by a passion its object never meant to evoke.

What know the rich of that keen hunger which drives the poor to beg or steal? What knows the woman rich in beauty, with the homage of hearts continually cast at her careless feet, of that hungering for human love?

In some families beauty of person is a thing more often derided than praised. External beauty is systematically depreciated. Children who show

the least desire for the becoming are checked by that old aphorism, "*Pretty is as pretty does.*" Thus it had ever been in our family. We had been taught to believe beauty a disadvantage, rather than a pleasant or pleasing possession. We had learned to look on it as a thing that was almost certain to lead its possessor to ruin, that never failed to lead to worldliness and vanity.

Often had I heard it deplored as a misfortune that Emily was less plain than myself or Abby.

Is it any wonder that until *now* I had not felt the misfortune of being ugly? Only I, of all animate and inanimate things in and around the Red Leaf mansion, was utterly devoid of beauty.

The grounds, the forests, the fields of cotton or sugar-cane—all had their own individual beauty of aspect. The house itself, inside and outside, gave delight to the looker on. The walls of the library, of halls and chambers, were full of high, holy, or happy thoughts. Pictures and statues, and silken hangings and gilded mirrors, were seen at every turn. Without, the soft summer

air, the gold-rimmed clouds piled up, the grand old river rolling on in sullen majesty to the bosom of the Mexic Gulf—all and everything the eye lingered on with a lazy lovingness.

And the beings to whom all this belonged were even pre-eminently beautiful—master and mistress and children. Even the negroes were handsome after their kind. Their fine development of limb and muscle, their free step and satisfied expression, their ebon skin and gleaming teeth, made a picture of barbaric beauty in contrast and in keeping with the whole place.

I, only I, seemed a blot in this world of harmony! The passionate love-lore of the poets, the romancers, with whom for the last six months I had lived and dreamed, now awoke within me as the cry of my own heart.

In my father's house a dream of love could not have dawned on my soul. As soon might a rose bloom from the bare bosom of a rock, as so soft a thought bloom in a hard home like ours.

Here, in Red Leaf, how different. The very

air seemed laden with love. Is it a wonder it stole into my empty heart? Is it a wonder? Fool, fool that I was!

Love, as belief, is not a thing of the will. What heart can say "I *will* love this," "I *will* hate that"? The love or the hate comes to the heart of itself. The waves of passion roll up and surcharge the soul, as the waves of the sea roll up and over the creature floating in its waters.

We may crush, but can we kill? We may conceal the pain, but not destroy.

The full rivers of love lay in my own soul, even before I dreamed of the ocean to which they were bound to flow.

From the crown of his stately head to the soles of his arched feet he was what I would have created had the power been mine to embody in mortal form the high and splendid ideal that haunted my mind.

Seeing him face to face, could I make myself stone and feel not?—blind and see not?

When first in his presence, as he embraced the

children, and turned his eyes on me, my heart stood still. I was stricken as though a god had come down for mortals to adore.

Better had I looked on Death that day! Better I had taken to my heart grim Death, with his bare bones and sightless eyes! Better I had laid my living lips to Death's mocking mouth, and sunk with him to the grave and the grave's worms, than looked and loved as I looked and loved that fatal day.

When released from the loving arms of his sister and brother, he lifted his hat from his head, slightly bent towards me, asking Edgar to introduce him. Had I been a princess, arrayed in silken robes, his courtesy could have been no more knightly.

We turned homeward. As he walked by my side—his kingly head uncovered, his fair hair blown back by the enamoured breeze—I scarcely knew whether I were awake or in some fair dream, peopled by beings more radiant than dull earth produces.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAND DINING OF THE SLAVEHOLDERS.

EARLY in the week after the master's return, I observed among the house servants an unusual commotion. The maids and the men met in groups at the garden gate, or on the back portico, or at the heads of the stairways, and chatted in animated whispers.

If Philip or Milly chanced to catch them in these gossipings, they were sent about their business with more than the ordinary sharpness. I made no inquiries of these high officials, or of their subordinates; the peculiar character of the politeness these negroes showed to me—so different from the manner shown to their owners, and owners' slaveholding friends—had the effect of preventing anything like freedom on my part.

I confess I was disappointed in these Red Leaf slaves. I had come among them so devoted to their interest—I had so undoubtingly counted on their co-operation, on their warm friendship and sympathy for me in my trying position; to receive instead something very like suspicion, to have presented only impassible politeness, was indeed a disappointment.

I had looked for distrust and suspicion from Southern whites, but not from the blacks. In this Devaseur family, nothing was as I had expected to find it. The owners of the slaves wore an air of unsuspicious openness, as if, on their part, there was nothing to conceal, and on mine no device not open to the day.

The blacks bore themselves as if they considered me a secret enemy, of whom they must be wary. The sly glances the ebon Rose shot at me from the corners of her dead black eyes I had come to consider less as indications of slyness in *her* than as caused by her belief that *I* was sly. Why she should distrust me I could

not conjecture, unless it was because I was "dat ar Novern 'ooman." It may have been, because in the matter of style, of elegance, I could not compare with their rich aristocrats. I had come to know the wide, wide difference between a *respectable* appearance and an "aristocratic air."

While my appearance was eminently respectable, it lacked everything that goes to make up grace and beauty. Negroes form opinions altogether from outside show. I had heard them express admiration of persons, as being "*born ladies*," "*born gentlemen*." So far as I could see, the only qualities attesting a title to "born ladyship" were elegance of manners and dress.

A negro's scorn for "po' white trash" is ineradicable. I sometimes strongly suspected that these luxury-lapped slaves classed all Northern people as "po' white trash."

When Rose came to my room that night with a pitcher of ice water, her manner showed that her mind was big with some topic she wanted to talk of. As she lingered, and looked at me

from the corners of her heavy black eyes, I gave her a chance.

"What is it you wish to say, Rose?"

She wanted to know what I was "going to wear to the grand dining?"

So a "grand dining" was the cause of the unusual excitement among the servants!

"I have heard of no dining," I answered evasively. I am ashamed to confess the poverty of my wardrobe sent a sudden flush to my face. "Who gives the dining?"

"*We* gives it," answered this poor foolish girl, who always spoke of herself as if *she* were one of the family. "An' all the gran' folks in the country is comin, ladies and gentlemen, an' *we's* goin to have a gran' dance after dinner. A band o' musicians is comin from de city, an Mas' Lynn fetch me dese all de way from Europe. I goin wear 'em to the gran' dinin'."

She drew from her pocket a set of white jewellery, unique in style, and singularly suited to the coal-black skin of the wearer. Rose stood

before my mirror, put the rings in her jetty ears, the necklace on her jetty neck, and the comb in her shining woolly hair. With a most satisfied expression she turned to elicit my applause. I gave it readily. Dead black as she was, except her gleaming teeth and the white of her eyes, the white pendants from her ears, the circlet on her neck, the bracelets on her arms, gave a sort of barbaric beauty to her appearance.

"Do you intend to dance?" I inquired.

"*Me* dance wid white folks!" she cried in great scorn. "*Our* white folks is'nt none o' your po' white trash. *I* tell you, de Devaseurs is de grandest people in de State! My great, great, *great* gran'daddy belonged to de Devaseur. I hear Aunt Milly tell all about it. Dat was ole Master, Hugh Devaseur. He comed over from France, an dey calld him a Hugnot, and my great, great, *great* gran'daddy comed long from Afriky dat very same time, though not in de very same boat, kase you see one boat comed from France and one comed from Afriky."

After she had given me this piece of family history, she further informed me how dreadfully disappointed Mrs. Devaseur was that her nieces would not arrive in time for the grand dinner.

"Miss Gertz done writ she may'nt come home till fall," added the loquacious Rose.

I learned that "Miss Gertz" was a niece of Mrs. Devaseur. Gertrude Gordon was her full name,—Mrs. Devaseur's brother's daughter. Miss Gordon, with Miss Clara Devaseur, a niece of the deceased Mr. Devaseur, were in Germany completing their education.

Rose proffered to assist me to dress for the grand dining, which service I politely declined, for two reasons. First, I had never had the assistance of a maid, and felt she would more embarrass me than aid. Secondly, I secretly suspected this girl was actuated by a vulgar curiosity as to the state of my wardrobe.

On the following day, while walking on the east verandah, I passed a door now open for the

first time since my residence at Red Leaf. It led into a spacious oval-shaped room, with lofty ceiling, from which hung a magnificent chandelier. The walls were frescoed with gay scenes from heathen mythology, without doubt pleasant to look upon, but, as it seemed to me, singularly unfitted for Christian eyes. As I looked I called to my mind my father's ascetic principles, and how he would have shuddered at the sinfulness of these people.

That I had ceased to shudder was a matter of some anxiety. Was I imbibing loose principles? Was I growing worldly-minded? This was the ball-room, devoted to sinful dancing, to wild revelry.

As I slowly walked around the room, examining the pictures frescoed on the wall, a folding door near one end opened, and Philip appeared, towel in hand, wiping off a silver epergne. This second room was also long and oval-shaped, but not as large as the ball-room. This was the grand dining-hall. It was hung with family

portraits. Everything in the ball-room was white and gold. The wood-work and the furniture in the dining-hall were of dark walnut, garnished sparingly with gold,—golden rims and borders, and tips and knobs. The effect was striking. The display of silver on the sideboard was splendid. Stiff and self-restrained as Philip was, I saw he was watching me closely to enjoy the surprise or the admiration he expected me to exhibit. I resolved to disappoint him. I maintained an air of quiet indifference, looked about, and went forth without a word which could lead him to think I had never before seen so much splendour.

Thursday was the eventful day. Every preparation was complete. The confectionary had arrived by the steamer. The musicians had come on the same boat. The guests were not expected until three o'clock, P.M. All this I gathered from Rose. Not yet had either the Master or Mistress of Red Leaf mentioned the subject to me. I began to think it was not

intended that I should join their grand guests, or witness their gay dance.

In this I was mistaken. During breakfast that morning Mrs. Devaseur said to me: "Miss Stanhope, we dine in the large dining-room to-day. Guests are expected. The hour will be later than our usual dinner-hour.—What hour shall we dine, Lynn?"

"The boat will arrive at three. Five, if it suits you, mother," answered the Master. Then, addressing himself to me, he continued—

"You will have an opportunity to-day, Miss Stanhope, of becoming acquainted with some of our friends. Mother tells me she has lived secluded since you have been with her."

"I have not been equal to society, Lynn," said his mother. "I hope Miss Stanhope has not suffered from the solitude."

I assured her the time had passed away very pleasantly.

"A little society," said the Master, "might have added to the pleasure."

"As I have never been in what is called 'society,' and know nothing of it, I was unconscious that it was needed to fill the measure of contentment."

"Perhaps," said the master, with his luminous smile—"perhaps if you were better acquainted with society you might be still less conscious of the need. It is the unknown that assumes the most enchanting aspect."

"The un*known*, but not the un*imagined*."

"True," he replied. "Imagination lures us like a will-o'-the-wisp; we follow its dancing lights, in search of blissful realities."

I looked on him, as he stood there in careless grace, leaning on the marble mantel, in the morning of life—in the beautiful morning of his fair young life, fashioned in an ideal mould. Youth, intellect, beauty! What a woeful contrast we presented, he and I!

In his one person seemed centred every good and perfect gift. In mine, not one.

Before him the fairest future spread her

golden wings—wings that reached across the sky! Behind him lay his past years, as peaceful as a summer's dream.

My future spread out, dark as the wings of the night; not a star spangled them. *My* past years lay behind me—hard, rigid as the iron railway's track.

The gilded mirror on the mantel reflected our two forms—a man's and a woman's. What had they in common, this man and this woman? Both yet walked in the flowery kingdom of youth, both were heirs of the ages gone, both children of the golden present.

Yet the one was the neglected, scorned stepchild; the other the well beloved and well blessed.

Both heirs to the ages? Yes; but the one heired all the good, the other the bad. The ages hold within themselves all things—good and bad, little and lofty, beautiful and ugly.

To *him* had descended the lofty, the beautiful, the good.

To *me* had come down the little, the low, the ugly.

Who ordained and decreed this cruel difference?

As I looked on him, these mutinous thoughts thronging my brain, he smiled as he said—

"Is it not so? Is not imagination a rare deceiver? Has it not pictured society to you in the most alluring colours? Are not all the men in that ideal picture noble and good, and all the women true and beautiful?"

"There are some lives," I answered, with a tinge of bitterness in my tone, "so strictly under the whip and spur of Poverty, that hard master, they never have a moment's time to give rein to the imagination. Such has been my life."

He opened the breakfast-room door to let me pass, bowed to me gravely. The smile had left his face; in its place I thought I saw something like sympathy.

By two o'clock, the gallop of horses' feet and the roll of carriage wheels broke on my ear. I sat at my chamber window and watched the

arrivals. First dashed up two young horsemen, fast followed by a close carriage. The young men were enough alike to be twins — both slender, straight, dark, and with a military bearing. They sprang, or, rather, threw themselves, from their horses, flung a coin at the black boy who grinned and took charge of the animals, doffed their wide-brimmed sombreros, and stood with uncovered heads and dark flowing locks at the carriage door, as though a queen were in it.

A middle-aged lady was assisted out. I had seen her before—Mrs. Pinkard, a wealthy widow, and mother to the two young men. They were just returned from the Kentucky Military Institute.

The second carriage was preceded by four flying horsemen, who rode as if some demon were after them. These four, as the two Pinkards, leaped impetuously from their steeds, flung money at the negro waiting to take their bridles, and stood with bared heads before the

carriage door, as if four queens were in it—as in truth was the case, if royal bearing and regal attire, if youth and beauty, go to make up queenship.

Four young and beautiful women descended the carriage steps, the tips of their gloved fingers resting on those of their courtly cavaliers. In this fashion they were led to the hall-door, up the steps, where they were met by Philip and Milly—Philip conducting the gentlemen to their rooms, Milly the ladies.

The next arrival was a solitary horseman, both horse and rider remarkable for size. The horse was unusually large, and the rider almost gigantic. In violent contrast with the haste of the other horseman, this one came up with provoking slowness. Even after arriving in the crowd, where stood the negro ready to receive his steed, this herculean rider sat still and leisurely surveyed the scene, the house, the grounds. An immense sombrero covered his head, so that I could not see his face; but I saw that his hair

was blond and his beard tawny; both were long and flowing.

There was something in this man's appearance that recalled the knight of old. He sat on his steed as though he and it were one. I almost expected to see him wield a lance with a mailed hand, and show a helmet and visor beneath his overshadowing hat.

After watching him deliberately alight from horse and slowly walk up to the hall-door, I left the window with a sigh, and began the sad business of dressing for the grand dining.

Beautiful women may delight in the work of the toilet; plain ones like myself find it a dismal task. I hastily arrayed myself in my drab silk, still as good as new, highly respectable, but strikingly unfashionable and inelegant.

Before entering the drawing-room, in which were assembled the guests waiting the dinner-hour, I stood near the door looking in. The room was brilliantly lighted, the ladies were in full evening dress, low in the corsage, with long

trailing skirts. They seemed to me to resemble birds with drooping and splendid plumage. Mrs. Devaseur sat on a sofa near the centre of the apartment. The Master of Red Leaf stood by her side, apparently in deep thought. He did not look as if he saw or heard aught that was passing. The chatter and hum of voices filled the air.

I had often said to myself, "This man's beauty is exaggerated in your view. You have seen so few handsome men, you are no fit judge of masculine beauty. You compare him with such men as Lebanon Long, as your father, as the uncouth deacons in your church, the men who dig and delve for their daily bread. When you see him by the side of other men of his class, you will find you have over-estimated his high qualities."

I resolved to put him to the test. I looked critically on the men before me, as young, proud, and aristocratic as he. I compared them part by part with him.

The two Pinkards were strikingly handsome men. They were twins—tall, straight, and dark, with a proud military bearing, and quick, flashing eyes. No wonder their mother looked on them with a beaming pride.

Perhaps the most remarkable man present was the herculean individual whose arrival I had witnessed from my window—not so remarkable for a higher order of beauty, refinement, or intellect, as for the size and perfection of his physical being. Had he been red-skinned, I would have thought him a splendid savage. He was over six feet high, with a breadth of chest and power of limb I had never seen equalled. He carried himself with an air of command; his step, slow and sedate, was the step of a monarch; his tawny beard lay over his breast; his tawny hair hung on his shoulders. I afterwards learned he was from the wilds of Texas; born and brought up far from the sights and sounds of civilisation.

No wonder this man bore himself as a king—sole master as he was of one of those immense

establishments common in California and Texas, called Haciendas. The land belonging to his hacienda would have made a respectable State. His cattle, ranging on hill and prairie, counted by the thousand. The name of this favoured individual was Richard Rawlstone.

As I looked from this fine savage—from the brave and handsome Pinkards to the Master of Red Leaf—I could but confess my first judgment was right. They and he seemed to be made of different material—they from the clay ordinary mortals are made of, he from finest porcelain or precious parian.

As I stood near the door, hesitating whether to go in or out, Mrs. Devaseur's benignant eyes caught sight of me. She touched her son's arm; he bent his head to her lips. When he lifted it it was to look at me. Then he came straight to me.

"My mother," he said, with grave courtesy, "has commissioned me to conduct you to her. Permit me the honour."

He drew my arm within his own, and we slowly walked over the flowered carpet. I felt the fire of fifty eyes. My blood tingled to my finger-tips under the ordeal. How morbidly acute was my sense of deficiency—in grace, in beauty, in elegance of dress—during that short but torturing walk. Had the breadths of my drab dress—the short, scant, stiff breadths—been sheets of flame instead of dull silk, I could have suffered no more. I nerved myself for the trial, and flatter myself I betrayed no emotion.

Mrs. Devaseur made room for me by her side. If anything could have given me perfect ease, it would have been Mrs. Devaseur's smile—sweet, benevolent, apparently unconscious of any inferiority on my part. The Master had gone away after delivering me to his mother. We saw him across the room conversing with a middle-aged gentleman who wore spectacles.

Mrs. Devaseur informed me this spectacled person was a very learned man, formerly Lynn's tutor, to whom Lynn was very much attached.

"I am sure you will like him, Miss Stanhope," she said. "Mr. Princeton is a native of your own State. Lynn was anxious for him to come on your account. Next to seeing one's relatives, it must be pleasant, when so far from home, to meet persons of the same nativity."

Next to seeing one's relatives! What cared my relatives for me? These people for ever laboured under the mistake of thinking I pined for my own home. I asked myself bitterly if I had ever had a home. If home means love, affection, tender care one for another, then I had never known a home. If it meant a place to drudge in, a dark, cheerless, unlovely place to work in from daylight until dark, and on until two hours to midnight, then I suppose I had a home.

"Have you observed our tall Texan?" asked Mrs. Devaseur, looking at the splendid Saxon savage, as he towered up like a giant in the midst of a group of chattering girls. "Lynn says he is a noble fellow, with a heart as large as

his body is, or, rather, she corrected herself, "large in proportion to his body. You think him handsome?"

"I think we might call him magnificent," I said.

"You are right. We will say the Texan is magnificent. But the young Pinckards are certainly handsome?"

"Very," I replied. Then, seeing her eyes rest fondly on her own son, I suddenly said: "And *your* boy, how would you characterise *him?*"

"My boy!" she echoed, tears swimming in her eyes. "From head to foot, from the centre of his soul out, I see no flaw in him.—But *I* am his mother!" she gently added, as if to make excuses for the strength of her praise.

My heart endorsed her judgment. Neither could *I* see a flaw in him.

Presently the Master came up with his old tutor, and presented him to me. Mr. Princeton offered me his arm, and we stood up side by side,

both of us stiff, formal in appearance—I painfully conscious of the fact, he apparently unconscious. Dinner was announced. The Texan led in the Mistress of the house; the Master bore on his arm a beautiful woman, with a clear olive complexion, full red lips, and dark Arab eyes. She walked with languid grace; the lids of her dark eyes lifted themselves with a lazy pride. I was placed at table between the Master and Mr. Princeton. On the other side of the Master sat the olive-cheeked woman, who spoke with a slight lisp. Mr. Princeton endeavoured to interest me in conversation; I bent my will to listen, to answer intelligibly, but I must confess, despite my utmost effort, the Master's voice pierced and penetrated my existence.

"You must find a striking difference," remarked the ex-tutor, "between this climate and that of New England. Our winters up there were so long, here they are so short; *there* we had arctic severity, *here* we have tropic softness."

Before I could reply the music of the Master's voice stole to my soul through these words—

"Language at best is but an imperfect medium for thought or emotion; our finest thoughts are too subtle for words."

The ex-tutor looked at me sharply through his spectacles; I absently answered—

"Yes—very."

Apparently satisfied that I was listening, he went on.

"Have you ever turned your attention, Miss Stanhope, to the study of Geology? The Southern States abound in specimens that would interest you. Lynn and I once made a pedestrian tour as far up as Tennessee—have you seen our collection?"

I answered, "No," and was again forced to listen to the voice on the other side. Said that voice—

"Even Byron, the greatest modern master of language, complained of its inadequacy; complained that it was powerless to express that

which was most within him—soul, heart, and mind; that

'He would live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.'

If Byron failed to find words to embody his finer thoughts, how is it with meaner mortals?"

The red-lipped woman murmured something in reply, and I knew it was irrelevant, though I caught no word; the Master answered lightly, as if in dismissal of the subject.

"Ah! you are right. Meaner minds will doubtless find language all-sufficient to carry their lighter freight of thought."

"I think," remarked the Professor, with an amiable desire to be pleasant, "that you will like these people when you come to know them. Southern people are very charming if you get on their side. *I* lived in this house five years, and count those years the happiest of my life. Of course it comes harder for a woman to be transplanted among strangers. Mrs. Devaseur tells me you sometimes get a little—*home*-sick."

And this was why they had set this man to talk to me! They fancied I was pining for home. *Home-sick?* My heart echoed the word with a bitterness it had not felt before it knew what a home ought to be.

With a sigh of relief I rose from the table and went with the company into the grand ball-room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BALL-ROOM.

THE negro musicians were tuning their instruments. We stand by the wall, watching the brilliant couples promenade the floor, waiting the music of the waltz to start their bodies on the rythmic round. I had heard of waltzes as I had heard of thefts, of adulteries, and other forbidden things, but had never before witnessed the dance. I had been taught to think it a disagreeable and indecent sin—was it Satan himself that made that music, and the motion it inspired so beautiful to sense of sight and hearing?

The scene was indeed enchanting to poetic hearts—male and female figures, close clasped in one, floated by on the undulating waves of

sound, while faint odours of violets and roses filled the air.

"Do you dance?" asked the Professor.

"This is the first time I ever saw a dance," I answered. "My father thinks dancing one of the dangerous sins."

"Ah!—yes; *my* parents also had ideas of that sort. Is it not well to outgrow straight lines when they impede our development?"

"Yes; if we are certain the development is in the right direction. Our fathers were not fools; why should we presume they set up useless lines?" Yet even as I spoke, deep down *under* the stratum of ideas education had coloured or created, was a sceptical devil that bade me deride all the teachings of the past.

"We should not presume anything," answered the Professor, "but examine, analyse, and judge by the light we have before us, not by the light our fathers had. Looked at by the reasoning faculties, do you see anything evil in moving the body to musical sounds?"

"We are told it leads to evil—the clergy think so." Yet, *under* the religious thought the doubting devil derided and denounced the clergy as unworthy authority.

"Ah!"—was the significant and only answer vouchsafed by the Professor. It made me feel that what I had said was not worth refuting. As we stood looking at the figures floating by, the tall form of the Master came slowly swaying and whirling round in a musical wave. In his strong arms rested and floated the red-lipped woman, her eyes half closed, her being, as it were, in a languid repose, as if borne on by no exertion of her own. The trail of her rose-hued skirt struck me as she swept along. She was very handsome — a sensual, strong, beautiful woman. The lazy lids of her dark eyes lifted themselves for a moment as she passed, and I caught glimpses of the power that lay in them.

Was this the sort of woman the Master might love? — this splendid and perfect — animal? Would *he* be attracted by her full and perfect

physique; could he be so infatuated as to fancy the soul within it a mate for his?

Zenobia was the royal name of this royal tropical flower—Zenobia Lingard, half Spanish, half American in blood.

When the waltz ceased the Master resigned her to the tall Texan, whose ardent glances and air of proprietorship told a tale not difficult to read.

"Ah!" said I to my own heart, "*that* will be harmonious—a splendid Saxon savage, a splendid Southern animal. *Their* hearts may mingle and melt into one, but the Master's is of finer stuff, different material. Where would the Master find a soul fit to mate with his?"

CHAPTER IX.

TREASON.

I GREW weary of the scene; *I* was not a participant, but a looker on. I stole out on the verandah, the deepest depression over my spirits. Unattractive, unnoticed women will understand this. The glimpses caught of a brighter, lovelier life than I could live were not calculated to elevate my spirits. I mournfully regretted I had ever left my father's house, my native village. In that stagnant place my life would have gone on like a sluggish stream, knowing neither keen joy nor keen pain.

I paced slowly up and down the verandah. The moon was shining clear and full, but the verandah lay in deep shadow. I had sought it for its shade and solitude. The other side of the

house was bathed in the bright light of the moon. The two verandahs met in the rear of the house; a frail partition of lattice work, trailed with vines and fragrant flowers, divided the two. As I neared this green wall I heard voices on the other side. The Master's I would have known in the furthest parts of the earth. The deep gutteral of the Texan's none could mistake. The other voice I took to be one of the young Pinkards.

These men had left the gay scene in the ball-room to discuss, not wine, not women, not politics, but—*War! War!* WAR!

Little as it appears with its three letters, that dreadful word, which holds within itself every crime possible to humanity, began to assume gigantic proportions. When I turned my face to the North it spread itself like black wings from sky to sky; it cast an awful shadow over the whole South. People looked and listened, as if a storm were about to burst.

Only a network of flowers and vines, supported

on slender palings of wood, was between me and these haughty Southerners. I crept softly up to the fragrant partition, and, crouched in a corner, listened to Southern treason.

At that period the rankest treason was openly uttered all over the South. The Union was spit upon, the Union flag was jeered and scouted as a contemptible rag, and nothing was done to check or punish such offences. Had our Government *at once* made itself felt, had it stretched forth its strong arm and clutched every treason-preaching politician, and hung him as a traitor, would it not have crushed the war in its incipiency? Instead of this energetic course, many of the North's most distinguished men argued that the Northern States had no atom of right to coerce the Southern. Horace Greeley, himself a most ardent friend of negro freedom, in his paper, the *New York Tribune*, of December 17, 1860, three days before the secession of South Carolina, said:

"If it (the Declaration of Independence) jus-

tified the secession from the British Empire of three millions of colonists, in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five millions of Southerners from the Federal Union in 1861."

And in the *Tribune* of February 23, 1861, five days after Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederate States, at Montgomery:

"We have repeatedly said, and we once more insist, that the great principle embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, that 'governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed,' is sacred and just; and that if the Gulf States choose to form an independent nation, they have a clear moral right to do so."

Greeley forgot that only the *white* people in the South were permitted to vote on the question of secession. The four millions of negroes were not allowed to make known their wishes. In the discussion of the *right* of the South to secede, these Southerners utterly ignored the existence

and the opinions of their slaves. Horace Greeley made the same mistake.

When I crept to the corner young Pinkard was speaking. "Lincoln's election," said he, "will be the best thing that can happen for the South. It will drive her to assert her independence, which she should have done thirty years ago."

"The Yankees," began the deep tones of the Texan's voice, "say the South cannot be kicked out of the Union. Considering the tame way we have taken Yankee kicks and curses, —— me! if I don't believe they are about right."

"But the time has come," said Pinkard. "The South is aroused. She will no longer tamely submit to Yankee aggression. She will assert her independence, and fight for it, as our forefathers fought for theirs."

"Had the people of the South followed the leading of her wisest statesman, John C. Calhoun," said the Texan, "we would not now be the hangers-on of the North, as we are. Nor would New England be the puffed-up province it is.

Thirty years ago, when that old humbug, Henry Clay, was helping Webster sing pæns of praise to the protective tariff, Calhoun saw that a protective tariff meant tribute paid to New England manufacturers. We have paid tribute so long, by the Lord! I believe the spinners and weavers of Massachusetts think they own us, body and soul!"

"Secession will bring them to their senses," said Pinkard. "Once free from the Federal Union, the South can build up her own factories, or buy the cheap goods of Old England. The South will be the richest and fairest nation on the globe."

"The Yankees say the 'Union is a league with Death and a covenant with Hell,'" replied the Texan. "They say the truth. *We* get the Death and Hell portion. Down with a Union like that!"

These words made my blood boil. Was there no halter for treason like this—treason against the best Government the world ever saw? The

Master still kept silent. Was *his* heart also filled with treason? The treason went on.

"Is it not enough," asked the Texan, "to make Texans gnash their teeth with rage to look back on the folly of their conduct?"

"Of what folly do you speak?" asked Pinkard.

"This," he answered. "The Texans won their freedom from Mexico and surrendered it to the United States. Had they been as wise as they were brave, we would now be a great and free people."

"It was indeed a woeful mistake," said the Master, with a sigh.

"Mistake!" said the Texan, fiercely, "it was a crime! A political blunder which plunges a free people into bondage *is a* CRIME."

"What a chance the Texans threw away!" exclaimed Pinkard.

"*Chance!*" cried the Texan. "It drives us mad to think of it. Our beautiful Texas, the paradise of the Western World!—With her splendid territory, large enough for half-a-dozen

New Englands to hide in; with her soil the richest on the earth, her skies the bluest, her stars the brightest, her climate unrivalled, her glorious freedom so freshly won from the barbarous Mexicans—with all these endowments, and the lone star in her unsullied hand, our beautiful Texas offered herself up to that greedy old Griffin—the *Union*—and under his feet has she lain ever since."

Was the Master asleep, that he listened in silence to treason like this?

"I have come to hate the very word UNION," said Pinkard savagely; "it smells of fraud and corruption."

"Union," replied the Master, more calmly, "means harmony—means a marriage of love, of attraction. Where discord and hate instead of love reign, there is already a natural divorce, and should be a legal. Since the North and the South hate each other, they ought to separate. The trouble is, we are not sufficiently civilised to part without a war."

"*War!*" said Pinkard. Where is the necessity of a war? The South is more than willing to go in peace. By what right can the Northern States attempt to coerce States as free and sovereign as themselves? If the Northern States have such right, then the South has never been free; has ever been subject. If the Northern States have not such right, and now assume it, then it is a usurpation that we are bound to resist."

"My dear boy!" said the Master. "You ask, by what right? By the right of *Might!* The Northern States have twenty millions; the Southern five millions."

"But why should the North wish to hold us?" asked Pinkard. "It hates us. Its people tauntingly say we cannot be kicked out of the Union; they cover us with vile epithets; they say a union with us is a league with Death and a covenant with Hell! Can they now so shame themselves as to object to a separation?"

"They will object," said the Master, "and that so seriously as to plunge the country into a fear-

ful and desolating war to prevent our going. New England knows that an independent South would either set up factories for herself, or buy her goods in the cheapest market. New England has grown rich on protective tariffs. Beneficial as Independence would be for the South, it is unwise to assert it now."

"Why unwise?"

"Because," said the Master, "the motives of the South will be misrepresented. Lincoln is known to be a zealous Abolitionist. To secede just as he is elected President will be putting the South's desire for political independence on the low plane of protecting slavery. At any time during the last thirty years we could have asserted our right to secede with a better grace than now. If the North forces on us a war, it will be a war of conquest. The South cannot hold slavery in one hand, and a sword in the other. She should abandon slavery, arm the negroes, and march them to the battle-field by the side of their masters."

"Do you mean it?" said Pinkard.

"Never!" cried the Texan. "We want no slaves to fight for our freedom! We can win it with God and the right on our side!"

"Nevertheless," calmly said the Master of Red Leaf, "were I absolute ruler of the South, and the North determined to whip us into subjection, I would, without an instant's delay, issue a proclamation of freedom to every slave, draft and drill them, and send them to meet the invader."

"It is well you are not our ruler," said the Texan scornfully.

"Perhaps," said the Master with a sigh, "nations, as individuals, go on to their destinies. A force beyond any one man's control moves the masses, as the waves of the sea are rolled up or out; and the best we can do is to keep on the surface."

CHAPTER X.

MY MADNESS.

AFTER all it was not his manly beauty, though unequalled, that so befooled my reason and took captive my senses.

More potent than any beauty was the high-bred courtesy of his manners; the proud yet gentle deference, so fascinating to women; the tenderness in the tones of his voice; the something not to be expressed in words away down in the depths of his eyes when mine met his.

Fool that I was! not sooner to know that this most unkind tenderness, this cruel courtesy, was the homage his breeding had taught him was due to the sex, irrespective of the individual.

On that first day I saw him, after reaching my chamber, I went straight up to the mirror and

looked critically at my poor face. Never before had I given it so much attention. I had been educated to despise beauty, to set no value on grace. Not until that moment had the plainness of my appearance given me an instant's concern. As it were a new sense awakened within me—a sense of miserable ugliness—a craving for comeliness.

For six months I had lived in a world of beauty—not only the world laying abroad beneath the sun, but the world of beauty that lies within the lids of books: the lovely world created by the poets. I had drunk full draughts of beauty; I was steeped in it; I dreamed of it; I breathed it, for loveliness filled the air like a perfume. All earth was fair and beautiful. I, only I, was a blot, a blotch on its fair face.

Why should *I* be thus accursed? Why, in a world so full of beauty, had no small particle fallen to my share?

As I looked on my meagre form, my sallow visage, I said to myself:

"*You* dare dream dreams?—*you!* Intolerable fool! Stick to your mission among the slaves; avoid *him* as though in his one person were all the poisons earth possesses!"

Acting on the wisdom of this order given by my reason, I avoided the Master of Red Leaf as sedulously as though I hated him. I devoted myself to the cause of negro freedom. I sought every occasion to sound the slave mind; and where I found it ripe for the seeds of liberty, I cast in thoughts and words that would take root.

It seemed to me so marvellous that these negroes did not rise and shake off their chains. Not only in this parish, but in many others, the slaves were as a hundred to one white person. What prevented them from making the attempt? They were lapped in a slothful contentment. With devilish ingenuity their masters endeavoured to reconcile them to the accursed condition of servitude by surrounding them with creature comforts. They were fed into torpidity of soul. The quantity of gross bacon consumed

by these blacks was something to wonder at. Was it strange stall-fed men should cease to feel the deep disgrace of a slave condition?

I strove earnestly to awaken in these black breasts something of the Spartan spirit—Freedom or Death! When the very germ of this spirit seemed lacking, I strove to implant it; with what success time will show.

Though only seeing, only speaking, to the Master of Red Leaf when it could not well be avoided, yet living in the same house, eating at the same table with him, meetings, though brief, would occur; words, though few, were spoken.

After all, what mattered it? Absent or present, he became the one dominant tenant of my thoughts, and this in despite the earnest effort of my will, the strongest scorn and protest of my reason. Banish him I could not.

Yet, at this time, I did not tamely yield to the tyranny of his spirit, which thus dominated mine.

I struggled against it daily, hourly. I hated

myself for my miserable weakness; I hated *him* as the cause of it.

Lunacy is the most awful affliction a chastening God can send on man: to curse a wretch with madness, yet leave him reason enough to be conscious of the curse, is indeed the acme of evil humanity can suffer.

I had this to endure. For some inscrutable purpose I was afflicted with a malady of the mind, and a clear perception of the infliction. In all its phases I watched it—its beginning, its growth, its final complete triumph over my powers of resistance, and complete possession of my heart, mind, and soul.

In my efforts to resist and conquer this lunacy I was wont to wander in wild, unfrequented ways; yet even as I wandered, *his* image walked by my side.

I could not read. From every page the fathomless depths of his unequalled eyes looked into mine; the music of his marvellous voice murmured the rhythm of the poet's words.

How could I escape his influence? All nature had become a portion of his being. To look on any loveliness was to see him. The stars of heaven were his kin, the splendour of day seemed to dawn from his existence.

Not yet were the dogs of war loosed on the South. The deluded people of the South indulged the hope that war might be averted. The Southern Commissioners were busy in Washington, and the crafty Seward played with their hopes as a cat plays with the mouse it means to devour. Meanwhile the Master of Red Leaf pursued his studies with an insatiable craving for knowledge.

From my chamber window I could see his. The light of his lamp became my star. It was my absurd habit to watch that star until the coming dawn dimmed or warned him to extinguish it. Fool!—thrice fool that I was!

Those who have never themselves experienced or witnessed in another a love or a lunacy like mine, will not be able to conceive of the many

struggles I made to break myself off this one idiotic habit; of the many resolutions I formed to force myself to bed and to sleep, regardless of the lamp, or the student behind the curtained windows.

I had power to leave his presence, to ascend the stairway to my chamber, to lock myself in, to say to myself, "I *will* not watch;" "I *will* not look at the lamp-lighted window;" "I *will* master my own mind;" "I *will* break this slavery."

And, obedient to my WILL, I would read page after page, or write—write—write. Weak wretch that I was! No inkling of the author's meaning came to my mind, and the matter I scribbled was utterly worthless. How else could it be when only thoughts of *him* filled my existence?

A power I could not resist—Can the dew resist the warm rays that drink it? Can the water resist its absorption by the amorous air? —drew me to the window to see if the light yet beamed from *his*. A power I could not resist kept me there watching, waiting in the hope that

his shadow might fall on the curtain, *his* form come between me and the light of his lamp.

When he chanced to lift the curtain and look forth, for the moment, the measure of my desire was full; an indefinable rapture would fill my soul, as though from *his* higher being floated forth on the soft air of night divine emanations enriching mine.

But if he lifted not the curtain, if no shadow fell upon it, if the slow hours went by with nothing for me, what tears of shame and bitterness rained down my sallow cheeks, wetting the wooden sill on which they lay.

CHAPTER XI.

HUMAN MAGNETISM.

This could not go on without racking my physical frame. I wasted away. The flesh, never abundant on my bones, seemed about to abandon them entirely.

Observing my failing health, Mrs. Devaseur gently chided me for my recent habits. Why had I given up walking with the children? such rambles were invigorating. Why keep myself so secluded? society refreshed the mind after severe study.

Mistaken woman! She thought I was sacrificing my health on the altar of knowledge. She believed me bending over books when I was fighting my madness. I had refrained from

walking with the children because their brother was too often their companion; such walks were insidiously sweet.

In the afternoon Mrs. Devaseur sent the little girl to insist that I should take a walk. I could but comply. We went out of the front hall-door. Under the dark foliage of a magnolia tree, splendid with white blossoms, *he* stood talking to his little brother. They joined us as we passed by.

I said to myself—"Only this once." Not yet had my madness reached that height in which no struggle is made; that height when pride is forever laid low, and the miserable wretch seeks the object of idolatry, even when knowing that object receives the idolatry with dislike, scorn, or utter indifference.

From under the magnolia boughs and blossoms came the Master to meet us: walking by *my* side—*mine*, the poor, pallid, plebeian teacher's—his brow bared, his hat in his hand, as though he walked with a queen.

If this man possessed that haughty pride common to the slave-holding aristocracy, how subtly he concealed it! His position was equal to a prince's. Were not his slaves his subjects? his vast estate a principality?

Yet never, and I watched him closely, had I detected any of the vulgar pride of place and power. Whatever were the characteristics of ordinary slave-masters, this one seemed fresh and untarnished from the hands of his Maker: not a taint of meanness—one of the purest and noblest specimens of humanity.

There were times when the passion that so possessed me seemed to slumber and sink out of sight. This more often happened when near him. When in his presence a deceitful calm would steal over my heart: its tempests were stilled, its hunger appeased.

I bore myself calmly, even icily. I am morally certain no one in that family penetrated my secret, or suspected the agitations I endured. I conversed rationally, I think I may say, well.

Since in this paper I do not spare my faults, I need not hesitate to speak of the few gifts I claim.

Deep in the centre of my being—whether of mind, heart, or soul—burned enough of genius to fill me with adoration of its glory. I had enough of talent to enable me to clothe that adoration, or appreciation, in words not unpleasant to the listening ear.

The subjects, the books, that had engaged my attention were few, but to these few I had given earnest thought.

All thinkers, more or less, are original. Attrition with the thoughts of others wears off sharp corners: my sharp corners were yet unworn, so little had I known of the conflict of mind with mind.

The more I conversed with the Master of Red Leaf, the more conscious I became of my power to interest, to cope even with his large and cultured intellect.

And sometimes, after leaving him, with the

knowledge that *my* utterances had wrung from him a certain homage, despite the drawback of exceeding personal plainness, I would look into my mirror and wonder *if it could be?*

Then, ere my crazed heart had scarce framed the query, a bitter wrath would sweep away the idiotic suggestion. Too well, too well I knew, though the sweetness of Plato, the wisdom of Bacon, or the splendour of Byron, were uttered by unlovely lips, it were as nothing, as worse than nothing, compared to the silliest chatter made by roseate mouth.

What care men for poets, or wisdom, or high thought, if uttered by women not fair to look upon?

With woman all this is reversed. Beautiful as was the being who held me in bondage, I solemnly aver it was not his beauty that made his power. Had his body been a Satyr's, yet holding encased his beautiful mind, his soul made up of qualities akin to the high gods—had his truth, his tenderness, his brave and gentle

nature, been the same, I must have loved him the same.

Had he sought me, I should have fled with him deep into the forests, far from the haunts of humanity—would have laid my life at his feet, though they were cloven as a beast's.

There is a deeper truth in the nursery tale of Beauty and the Beast than is dreamed of by the careless many.

What woman's heart does not secretly respond to the true love of the unfortunate beast?—does not dreamily stir with a pity akin to affection, affection evoked by the sadness, the devotion, the despair found in a feeling breast, even though the breast of a beast?

Let no man despond on account of outside deformity. A man may be ugly, and old, and wrinkled — if the ugliness, the age, and the wrinkles lay but on the exterior man, he may win woman's love as well as the smoothest son of beauty.

Mirabeau was remarkably ugly, yet his genius

gave him power to make high-born ladies forget their honour, as well as their handsome husbands.

That woman knew something of her own sex when she said, "It is not the strength of a woman's passion that makes her yield to her lover, but the strength of his."

A woman loves a man for possessing qualities stronger than she can possibly possess. Female love may be more enduring, but masculine is more strong, and to this strength woman yields.

The reader need not retort on me these general aphorisms—my case was peculiar. My birth, my training, my long starvation of heart, had made me morbid. Yet I am convinced it was the large capacity of loving, which I knew lay in Lynn Devaseur's nature, that drew forth my love. Instinctively I felt he was capable of that deathless love Manfred felt for Astarte. Alas! I also knew that only such a kindred soul as Astarte's could evoke it.

The evening walks were now regularly taken. Sometimes the Master was our companion; more

often he was deep in his studies. No father could have loved his children more tenderly than he loved his young sister and brother. If they begged him to walk, books, writing, everything was dropped to gratify them.

I may as well confess it—it was not long before I lost the power to shun him, before I as surely gravitated toward his person, as the helpless leaf, loosened from the tree, gravitates towards the great magnetic earth.

Was there some hidden force in the mysteries of his being that drew mine to his, as the larger planets draw the smaller, or as the pitiful leaf is drawn to the earth? Wilful winds may waft that leaf hither and yon; from dawn till dark it may dance with the gay inconstant breeze; but the occult power of earth will bring it down to its broad bosom. There is no escape. Sooner or later the leaf will sink and lose its being in the all-absorbing earth.

My fate was like, yet unlike the leaf's. His being drew me as the earth draws smaller things,

yet not even during the one moment of death and decay could I rest on his breast. More like the wretched moth's was my fate—fluttering in the flame of his brightness, shrivelling, scorching to nothingness, unknown to him, unnoticed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TWO PORTRAITS.

Rose had often talked of "her young ladies," Miss Gertrude Gordon and Miss Clara Devaseur, both first cousins to the Master of Red Leaf, both orphans. These ladies had not yet returned from Europe. I had never heard Mr. or Mrs. Devaseur mention them. Though not taciturn persons, they seldom conversed of family relations or family affairs.

The library was a large, oblong room, very cool and pleasant in the summer time. When the weather became warm, Mrs. Devaseur required me to instruct the children in the library. I was aware that Mr. Devaseur very frequently made it his place of study. I mentioned this as

an objection, but his mother said, "It mattered not, Lynn was not disturbed by noises."

I yielded, and took up a position as far as possible from the bay window, facing the river, which I knew was his favourite place to sit and write or read.

I certainly expected he would retreat when the lessons were begun; in this I was mistaken. He remained apparently unconscious of our presence, as if he had neither sense nor sight for anything beyond the task he had set his mind to do.

Had I possessed beauty or any small share of it, I might have suspected other than literary labours held him there; but only *I*—plain, pallid, angular—I scorned myself for the weak suspicion; yet, fool that I was! it came again and again!

Had I not heard him say once, that "Souls attracted souls, that the physical being had but little power in so divine an emotion as love"?

Did I not *know* it was *his* soul that controlled

mine?—that moved it, and played on its many strings as a musical instrument; at times making the strangest, the sweetest rapture; at times such torture as only wrung souls can writhe with?

Did I not know, though the splendid person which embodied his splendid soul should suddenly shrink and shrivel to insignificance, the fine clay crumble and crack, the fresh youth disappear in a flash, grow grey and decrepit, yet, if the high soul were left, the high soul unchanged, I would love him the same?

In spite of my reason, in spite of the self-scorn that lifted itself like a lash and whipped me with keen strokes, whenever a wild hope would fill me with a foolish rapture, ever and anon would return the intoxicating idea—"*It is possible, it is possible.*"

My reason sternly assured me it was *not* possible. And now a new and more torturing ingredient was to be mixed with the misery already mine—*Jealousy.*

One morning, as I entered the library, I started back in astonishment. On the wall were hung two life-sized portraits, which had been placed there since the evening before. They were pictures of exceeding beauty, of women in the bloom of youth. These portraits lightened and brightened and *peopled* the room, as if they were things of life.

The younger was very fair, with wavy, abundant blond hair, soft blue eyes, and a rose-bud mouth.

The other was more stately, yet slenderly stately—was more grave, less radiant—at first I thought less beautiful. As I gazed on this latter, a sense of its marvellous beauty grew upon me. I gazed long and lingeringly. An indefinable feeling crept into my head—*Was it the prevision of coming enmity, envy, hatred, war, ruin, and despair?*

In vain would I force myself to look from this to the fairer picture; despite my will, my eyes turned and fixed themselves on the higher,

the grave face. It was strangely attractive. Why, why only on *me* had the spiteful Fates fastened the curse of ugliness?

These two women were prodigally lovely. With a bitter sense of my destitution, I again looked on the brighter of the two pictures.

How radiant she was! Light, love, sweet perfumes seemed to pervade the warm air around her. Red roses were in her loosened locks, red roses on her rounded cheeks, red roses on her half-smiling lips.

Yet despite the dewy freshness of this life-like beauty, the darker face possessed for me a deeper fascination. Was it that in the depths of her night-hued eyes lay a something that reminded me of Lynn Devaseur's?

At first sight no two individuals could seem to resemble each other less. To a careless observer, the fairer picture might appear more like the Master of Red Leaf.

In the portrait, as on his head, was blonde wavy hair; her eyes, as his, were of the deepest,

darkest blue. The complexions differed. Her's was brilliant, with an exquisite blending of white and rose; his was of the palest saffron hue, destitute of any tinge of red.

How perfect I had come to think that peculiar hue! Beside it how plebeian appeared the olive, or the ruddiness, of rougher natures! Forever will it be associated in my mind with lofty lineage, high thoughts, and a stainless soul.

I half believed he had descended from a race of bronzed gods, and yet held in his veins some of their antique ichor, which had given to his white mortality a golden tinge.

The graver portrait was severe in its simplicity. A woman draped in dark robes, and half hid in deep shadow, was gazing on a single star that shone from a clouded sky. All sister stars were covered by the rolling clouds; only that one looked down into the sweet depths of the woman's watching eyes.

It was the pathos, the poetry, lying in those eyes, that fixed a fascinated mind. The longer I

looked into them the stronger grew the feeling that I was looking into the fathomless orbs of Lynn Devaseur.

I asked myself the question, "Is it only in these orbs the resemblance lies?" In order to answer the query, I, as it were, took this woman to pieces, comparing separately her parts with his.

In colouring there was a strong contrast; in stature, in shape of limbs, in grace, in form of features, a strong resemblance.

But more, far more than all else, the soul seen in the eyes of both were one and the same. Her hair was as the raven's wing; his fair, with flakes of gold gleaming in it. Her eyes were as the night; his as the blessed heaven. Her complexion as white marble; his the palest bronze—whether from the fires of the tropic sun, or the gulf winds, or bronzed at birth, I never knew.

Yet from the eyes of both looked forth souls akin—souls, if parted, destined to meet and mate. I felt it then, I knew it then.

Mrs. Devaseur came in as I yet contemplated the pictures on the wall.

"They are portraits of my nieces," she said, "painted in Brussels. They arrived on the steamer last night."

"They are very lovely; are they like?" I asked.

"I should recognise them anywhere, though Gertrude's hardly does her justice."

The glance of her eye told me "Gertrude's" was the grave portrait.

"*Justice!*" echoed my heart, with the bitterness of envy in it. To have been but half as beautiful I would have given up half the life I I was to live.

CHAPTER XIII.

JEALOUSY.

THAT morning only myself and pupils occupied the library. In vain I watched and listened for his foot-fall, listened and watched. A strange wretchedness, like a vice, gripped my heart with such rude force, as almost to stifle its pulsations.

Since I had been teaching in the library, this was the first time he had not been in his place in the bay window.

I well know that those more blessed than I will only feel derision for the pain that sickened my soul. I also know that there are some in this world who will see in this record of my wrung heart a record of their own. What one human heart feels, others must have felt, and others will feel; just as the physical disease that afflicts any one member of the human family may afflict others.

There is a kinship of mind and a brotherhood of body running through the whole human race. None can escape this subtle affinity of blood and spirit, which unites with an invisible thread every son and daughter of Adam.

Although when Lynn Devaseur sat in his accustomed seat by the bay window, in no way had he seemed to observe me, by no sign did I perceive he was conscious of our presence, as he pursued his studies or continued his writing, yet the knowledge that he was so near was as exhilarating as wine; the sight of him as strengthening as strong drink.

Now that he came not, I missed him as the unhappy drunkard misses his daily dram. My nerves were stricken and unstrung, the stimulant of his presence was withheld, and my soul fainted within me.

With stern resolve I riveted my eyes on the book before me. My Reason said to me, "Call up your will; make it as iron to hold down your folly; crush it, or it will crush you."

I attempted to obey my reason. I could not. *I could not* conquer the keen suffering in my soul. This suffering showed itself in my poor body, a deadly palor spread over my face, my limbs shook as with an ague.

The children ran to tell their mother I was ill. My pitiable weakness, together with the deep shame which a consciousness of it caused, so far overwhelmed me that I burst into a passion of tears, as salt, as bitter as ever fell from mortal eyes.

Mrs. Devaseur, always kind and considerate, thinking me suddenly ill, dismissed the children, and urged me to retire to my room and rest. I obeyed her.

A strengthening cordial was brought me by Rose. Her mistress said I needed tonics and sedatives.

Alas! and alas!—

> "Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups in the world
> Could ever medicine me to that sweet rest
> I knew but yesterday."

When left to the silence and solitude of my own chamber, my thoughts became even more torturing.

Oh! to be mad, to fully feel and understand your madness, to struggle with it, to be for ever in a strain to conceal your affliction from the eyes about you—to wrestle, yet ever find it the stronger—to feel yourself all powerless to eradicate or subdue it, is the acme of human torture.

When no longer able to endure the solitude of my own chamber, I went out—I went forth to the forests. The four walls of my room seemed to be closing upon me; the air choked me; a fear that I might break out in ravings sent me forth to the pathless woods. Under the shadows of the moss-hung boughs — the melancholy shadows speared with slant rays of light — I tramped and tramped: no spot to reach, no object to look on, no thing to find.

When utterly worn and faint with fatigue and fasting, I returned to the house.

During all the day, whether walking through

the woods or pacing the floor in my room, I said to myself over and over, "*I am trampling it to death; I am grinding it under my heel.*"

Fool that I was! It was more masterful than ever! As I neared the house in which *he* was, a dreadful longing to look on him pressed me on, and *forced*—it was a force I had no power to resist—*forced* me to the library, with the sick hope of seeing him there.

Though the door through which I entered was dusky with the shadows of early eve, the farther end, the bay window, *his* window, was luminous with the rays of the setting sun.

In this radiance knelt a form for ever photographed in my heart.

The slant light streamed in over his fair hair, over his thought-crowned forehead, making it as a god's in brightness, in beauty, in glory.

Did the very light from Heaven love him, and lave him, and lay over him in the secresy and splendour of that sunset solitude?

A wild rapture flooded me, the rapture a

devotee is filled with in the presence of his idol.

As he knelt his eyes were upraised; in *them* also was the rapture of a worshipping love, though calmer than mine. A love I had long known was in his nature to feel, yet which I now for the first time saw going out from his soul.

Whither was flowing that stream of love? To whose feet did it fly? To *her's*—Ah God!—to *her's*. Yet her proud eyes turned not from the star on which they were fixed, turned not to meet and mingle with his.

Ah! had *I* been she, had to *me* fallen the priceless riches of his love, had to me been lifted that adoring gaze, even my lifeless semblance on the cold canvass must have bent to meet it!

The fire of the passion that burned in my soul would have given, even to my soulless picture on the wall, enough of life and love to have responded to his.

As the full meaning of the scene flashed upon

me, as sudden as had rushed the rapture on my heart, it fled, and a pang, keen, crueller than Death's, pierced to the centre of my soul. I fell senseless to the floor.

Oh Death! Perverse, wanton, foolish Death! How often dost thou aim thy dart at those who hate thy sight and shudder at thy name, passing by the wretches who willingly would rest in thy cold embrace!

What anguish had been spared me, what agony of remorse, had Death, in that moment of supreme suffering, sent deeper through my heart his deadly arrow.

They bore me to my chamber. They said I had fainted from fasting, from fatigue—that I had eaten too little, had studied too much. I was as carefully tended as though I too were a daughter of the Devaseur house, the hereditary mistress of slaves and broad lands—*I*, the poor teacher.

It was several days before I again found myself in the library, ready for teaching. Mrs.

Devaseur came ere I had begun, and sent the children to play. She said I was not yet strong enough for business, and gave me a romance to read. The book was "Jane Eyre;" it had long been out, but I had never chanced to see it. I began to read it reluctantly. In my then state of mind I had little power to fix my attention on anything but the dire drama going on in my own breast.

As the tenor of the story opened to my understanding, it took strong hold of my feelings, and I devoured the pages with the most eager interest.

Mrs. Devaseur was silently sewing. Seeing me pause in my reading, and fall into a reverie over points of similitude I fancied existed between the heroine of the story and my unfortunate self, she said, kindly—

"When my nieces return, Miss Stanhope, you will find Red Leaf less lonely."

"Will they return soon?" I asked.

"We expect them in the early autumn."

Involuntarily I glanced at the portraits. They were hanging side by side, and but little distance apart. I had thought Mr. Devaseur's eyes were directed to the darker picture; yet sometimes, as I looked from one to the other, doubts arose as to which had really received his homage.

"You admire them," she said, observing my gaze fixed upon them. "Which is the handsomer?"

"*This* one," I answered, "affects me like a cluster of bright-hued flowers; but *that*"—

"What of that?" she questioned, seeing I hesitated.

"Of *that* it is more difficult to speak. It is a high poetic face, embodying something of one's idea of Madame Roland, as she might have looked when listening to the *Marseillaise*—with more sweetness, more tenderness. Or Manfred's Astarte may have had a face like that before she was conscious of her fatal love."

With a strong effort I gave voice to the torturing question that harassed my heart—

"Which is to be Mr. Devaseur's bride?"

"*My* son's?" she asked, with an astonished face.

"Yes; Mr. Lynn Devaseur's."

"Neither the Gordons nor the Devaseurs," she said, with cold dignity, "believe in the marriage of first cousins."

No more was said. She went on with her sewing, I with my books. Miserable fool that I was! A millstone was rolled from my heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FEVER.

ABOUT this time the typhoid fever became epidemic on the Red Leaf place; in fact, it prevailed, more or less, on all the neighbouring plantations. The Red Leaf physician was soon obliged to procure a medical man from New Orleans to assist him in his labours, so numerous were his patients.

Although as strongly as ever convinced of the wrong, the crime, of slavery, I could not help seeing that in some measure that crime was atoned for. In no country in the world is the labouring class so well cared for during health, and so well attended during sickness, as were the slaves on the Red Leaf place. Self-interest,

as well as natural benevolence—the benevolence that an owner feels for a fine and useful animal —prompted the slavemasters to surround their slaves with such physical comforts as conduced to their health of body and mind.

In typhus fever, more than in any other disease, is the recovery of the patient dependent on good nursing, and proper nourishment administered with regularity and judgment. Medicine is but little needed. During long, weary weeks, cleanliness, pure air, sustenance, cheerfulness, is what the fevered sufferer must have, or death claims him.

With the few comforts the poor possess, no wonder this disease is so fatal; the wonder is that any carelessly or coarsely attended should recover. The wealthiest aristocrat in the land could have been no better cared for than these great, black field negroes of Red Leaf. A large building—airy, cool, and cleanly—in an oak-shadowed grove, enlivened by the songs of the birds, which were very numerous and tame (the

Master allowed no birds to be snared or shot on his place) was used as an hospital.

The caprices, the whims, the tastes of these rude people were consulted and gratified in all harmless things. The Master himself was night and day in the hospital, administering medicine and food. When the trained cooks were stricken down with the disease, Mrs. Devaseur herself attended to the preparation of the patients' food.

My pupils were sent to their aunt in Kentucky, to escape the contagion. I was urged to accompany them; but, as Mrs. Devaseur was in but feeble health, and Milly, her main reliance, was down with the fever, I deemed it best to remain and give what assistance I could. Mr. Princeton took charge of the children, delivered them safely to their relative in Kentucky, and returned to Red Leaf.

I was now in my element. In a thousand ways I made myself useful—indispensable—especially as nurse, and cook in the preparation of such diet as the doctor prescribed.

The Master of Red Leaf had made medicine a study; he was no mean practitioner. His slaves, with that blind worship the ignorant often give to what is greatly above them, had more confidence in medicine administered by their master than by the regular physician. The Master had slaves enough to assist in nursing, but only in *my* intelligence and wakefulness could he confide. I was necessarily thrown with him every hour in the day, and often during the night. I was unflagging in energy. To say I worked willingly would but poorly express the fact,—I found in this work peace of soul, contentment, rest.

My miserable insanity abated, my tumult calmed. To work with him, for him, though that work was to watch and tend his meanest slave, was all I asked.

A deep satisfaction settled on my heart. *Was it that I only craved to be near him? Was it that this nearness filled the measure of my want?* A dog is happy when lying at the feet of his

master, and miserable when separated. Was I so dog-like in my nature that to see him, to serve him, to be within the sound of his voice, the glance of his eye, satisfied the strong craving of my soul?

I will not cover up or keep back any folly of my life. On looking back, with keen and critical scrutiny, over the bared and yet quivering recesses of my heart, I cannot conceal from myself that during those months when we were so many moments and hours together in the negroes' hospital, deep down in the secretest part of my soul, hidden out of the sight of day, yet lurked the mad thought—"*It may be; it may be.*"

I have spoken of Charlotte Brontë's creation, "Jane Eyre"—false, pernicious work! The more pernicious because so powerfully written. Cruelly it seduces the plain, the pinched, and pallid of my unfortunate sex to accept the foolish faith in the possibility of such women inspiring a passion as ardent, as poetic, as Medora or

Astarte knew. I read and re-read the story. I wept warm tears of sympathy over the sufferings of a woman as like myself in dependency of position, in want of beauty and grace, as in the possession of a something akin to genius. I read this story until the dream of a happiness not possible to me, or to any such as I, haunted my heart, and lulled to a deceitful quiet the passion that filled me. If I could not wholly forget, I thrust from my memory the kneeling scene I had witnessed in the library. Over and over I repeated the words of his mother:—

"Neither the Gordons nor the Devaseurs believe in the marriage of first cousins."

I attempted to persuade myself the devotion I had seen was only a cousinly devotion, or of a knightly, chivalric character, in keeping with his high-born race.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL.

In the very acme of the fever's reign, the negroes of Red Leaf began their annual "religious revival." That is, they held meetings in their church night after night for several weeks —singing, praying, preaching, with great "sound and fury." The church was a plain wooden structure, totally destitute of ornamentation, situated in the same grove with the hospital, distant about a quarter of a mile from it.

On two or three occasions I had attended the negro meetings, and had been amazed at the amount of action and the wild clamour of noise that characterised their religious exercises—so different from the sober, sedate worship of New Englanders.

In front of the pulpit an open space was spread with straw. After the preacher had wrought himself and his hearers up to a high state of excitement, by picturing the horrors of hell, the torments of the damned, he passionately urged them to come up and get religion, or they would be lost forever. Then little and big, male and female, hurried up to the straw-spread place in front of the pulpit, knelt on the straw, groaned and wept and wailed, and prayed aloud for mercy. The preachers (there were several present) and many friends who, as the negroes expressed it, "had come through"—that is, had already "got religion"—knelt around the mourners on the straw, and prayed with loud voices.

They called on God to "come down, to come right now, and bless dese seekers of 'ligion." Then they vociferously, in stentorian voices, wanted "de Lord Jesus to come right 'mong dese misable sinners, an' wash der souls clean and white in de blood o' de Lamb." In the

midst of the mourners' groans, and the friends' prayers, and the preacher's continued exhortation, and the song sung by the whole congregation, ever and anon some excitable sister would spring up and shout, "Glory! glory! glory! I'm gwine home to Jesus; I'm gwine right home!" and other disconnected ejaculations, until she was hoarse and exhausted, all the time clapping her hands, and whirling about in a way to make her dizzy, until she would fall down in a trance. Scenes of this nature were enacted every night during the revival. The most effective preacher in periods of revival was a negro slave from the Pinkard Plantation. He was called Preacher Jim.

I once heard Preacher Jim deliver an exhortation over the dead body of a young negro girl. The deceased bore a very good character—rather better than the ordinary young black girl. She was docile, amiable, and sufficiently industrious, but "*had never professed religion.*" Preacher Jim declared there was no hope for her, she

was eternally lost, she was now in the hottest flames of hell,—whereat the girl's mother, father, and relatives set up the most unearthly wailings. The louder the shrieks and groans, the higher rose the preacher's inspiration. So fast and furious did he roll his tongue, and splutter forth the dreadful wrath of God, that his black lips became flecked with foam, and his deep-sunk, restless eyes red and bloodshot.

"Yes!" he cried, in an acme of fervour, as a fresh shriek broke from the dead girl's mother, "yes, my fellow-sinners, 'ceptin' you seek de Lord, and s'cure your salvation fro' de blood ob de Lam', you ebery one on ye gwine to dat same drefful place whar Sophy Jane is now, a gnashin' ob her teef, an' roastin' in de flames o' hell-fire. Does you know how hot dat hell-fire is? No, my bredrin, you doesn't, but I tell you de fire in dis world am ice to de fire o' hell. Ef so be de Angel Gabrel was to snatch dat po' gal, Sophy Jane, right now, dis blessed minute, from de flames o' hell, and was to fling her sudden and

slap right in de hottest fire *you* ever seo in dis yer world, dat ar Sophy Jane would freeze to death in ten minutes. Sich is de monsus diffrence twix hell-fire and yearthly fire."

Of course this terrible illustration had the desired effect of still further harrowing up the feelings of the bereaved.

While the religious excitement was at its height with the Red Leaf slaves, a deputation of pious old men, headed by the oldest negro on the place (he was reputed to be ninety-two), waited on the Master to ask permission to hold prayer-meetings in the hospital, by the bed-side of the sick, for the purpose of interceding with the Almighty, to stay his wrath and restore health to the fever-stricken. This the Master decidedly refused, on the plea that excitement would endanger the lives of the sick.

"Oh, Master!" exclaimed the slave-preacher, with great earnestness, "what worf am *dis* life put 'long side ob de life everlastin'?"

"Very true, Uncle Dick," returned the Master

gently; "but you know every man must do his duty according to his own conscience. Mine urges me to take all proper care of my people's lives here on earth; yours urges you to look after the life to come. We can both perform our duty. Your prayers will as readily ascend to heaven from the church as from the hospital, and will have the additional advantage of not interfering with my ideas of duty."

The negroes, whether convinced or not, were obliged to accept the Master's decision. Before going they begged the Master, if he found any of the sick were bound to die, they might be allowed to sing and pray around the departing soul. The promise was made, and the deputation of ancient black saints slowly wended their way up the path to the church.

In accordance with this engagement, when the Master thought one of the sick men (once a huge, brawny black, now wasted to a skeleton) past all hope of recovery, he had him placed on a litter and borne to a building some distance off.

The negroes gathered around his bed in crowds, and prayed and sung until midnight. Then the most of them dispersed, leaving a few to sit with the dying man until day. But the man did not die. After hanging between life and death for a week, little by little he slowly mended. His recovery was claimed by the negroes as a direct answer to their prayers. The name of this Herculean black was Sampson. He had lost an eye, and, as there were several Sampsons on the place, this one was called One-eyed Sampson.

Oh God! and oh God! Had this negro but died *then*, when Death seemed so near! In the inscrutable workings of Destiny, how strange that *my* fate should be linked with this horrible black's!—*mine?* What two beings could be so widely asunder? *I*, heir to the thousand years of religion and civilisation our race had known; *he*, heir to all the savagery and sensuality his savage people had lived in for five thousand years. And all that time inscrutable Fate was unwinding the subtle thread of Destiny that was

drawing us nearer and nearer together. "Who can control his fate?" Is it a wonder even believing hearts like mine grow faint and ask, Is there indeed a God? This negro was tenderly nursed; night after night the Master sat by his side, fighting off the Death that waited for him. And for what was his life preserved?—*for what?* Oh! had I known for what! Instead of warding off the grim monster I would have beckoned him on. I would have seized his skeleton hand, and led him to that couch whereon was stretched the giant son of Ebor. I would have flung him on the black body, parched and burning as it was, and pressed them face to face, eye to eye, lip to lip, the black beast's and the fleshless bones of Death, and made them clasp close in one long, everlasting embrace. But who can control his destiny?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EPIDEMIC ABATES.

TOWARD the end of three long months health began to resume its reign in Red Leaf. The greater number of sick were restored, or nearly so. But few had died. With a sinking heart I saw that my work in the hospital must end—the work in which I had found such full content, because it brought me daily into *his* presence, under his eyes, within the sound of his voice.

Thrown together as we had been, the Master and I, both by night and by day, calling on me for assistance, for service—shall I say it, for companionship—his manner toward me gradually changed—not that his courtesy grew less, but the distance between us seemed to shorten. Socially I felt nearer to him. I ceased to remember I was of a more plebeian rank than he. I fancied

the courtly politeness he never failed to exercise came less as a matter of course, as due to any creature clothed in feminine garments, and more as a species of homage to my individual self—to the intelligence I evinced, to the intellect I possessed.

In all the many conversations we had there in that dim-lighted hall, with none to listen save ourselves, surrounded by the dusky forms of the fevered slaves stretched on the long rows of couches, muttering and moaning; whether our talk were of history, or poetry, or the common affairs of life, I never failed to feel *my* knowledge, as compared to his, was but a child's. Yet I could but suspect the profound interest I felt somewhat atoned for my ignorance.

At times, when elated with the consciousness that *my* companionship had made for him less weary the work of watching, is it any wonder a wild rapture would thrill me? Is it any wonder I forgot to look in my mirror and say to myself, "Fool! fool!"

Then, one unhappy morn, Mr. Devaseur met me at the hospital door, and earnestly thanked me for all I had done. He needed me no longer; he would no longer tax my good nature; I must rest for a month; it would be a month before the children would return.

With a strange sinking of my heart I heard him, and turned away, walking on to the woods. The old life of starvation would now come back; the old dreary days of hunger and craving for one crumb from the riches of his being.

I walked into the woods. My head seemed suddenly turned to lead, it lay so heavy on my breast. Was it all over? Was I never more to meet him with the intimacy that had been to me such sweet content? Could I now, as once, crush down and conceal my fatal malady?

As I slowly went on under the shadow of the trees, I heard the coming of feet. What woman's ear is not quick to know the sound of the feet she loves?

It was the sound of his.

Some of my sex would have blushed. A woman fancying herself beloved will blush beneath the sudden glance of her lover's eye, the sudden coming of his feet. My emotion was too intense, too keen, too painful for blushes.

All the blood in my body fled from its accustomed beats, and surged about my heart.

The deadly pallor that overspread my face awoke his compassion; he took me by the hand, he led me to a seat on a fallen tree. He said I was worn out with nursing; I must rest and recover my strength. He spoke again of the great debt he owed me—a debt of gratitude; of the tedious hours lightened by *my* intelligence, *my* power to interest.

And I sat and listened, with sharp, whitened features, with icy fingers lying passively in his warm clasp—listened as though turning to stone, for even yet all the blood in my body was gurgling around my beating heart.

In his divine eyes was a gentle pity, in his manner the tenderest respect, in the tones of his

voice a strange sweetness—a melody, such as I had never heard before, but so familiar did it seem, I could but suspect I must have known him, and heard the music of his voice, and looked into the deeps of his eyes, in some former and fairer existence.

Oh! if there, in that moment of his compassionate gentleness, I had broken the bonds of my icy reserve, had cast myself at his feet, and given voice to the wild infatuation that filled me, and had begged of him—*death*, or such poor crumbs of pity, of affection, as he would fling to the dog that loved him!

Would he have scorned me? Would he have pitied me as men pity even though they despise?

For a single instant, as the clasp of his hand on mine struck to the very centre of my soul, sending along my strung nerves strange thrills, which seemed as it were to make a harmony of my whole being, the wild impulse so to act rushed upon me.

What devil held me back? What malignant devil laid his spell upon me, and held me there as dumb stone?

Would to God I had broken the spell! Would to God I had taken any course but the one I did!

Not that I am so besotted with conceit as for one instant to believe that, by any ways or means, I could have gained for myself the riches of his love. Ah, no!

But any divergence from the path I did follow might have led to less ruinous results, might have saved me the inextinguishable remorse that ever gnaws at my heart.

I sat there a dumb stone—cold as ice without, flameful as fire within. I made no demonstration. Only the deep forest was around us—the forest yet clothed in the untarnished verdure of summer, no sign of the coming winter yet showing on the green foliage. Even had I so determined, I doubt if I could have stirred hand or foot in betrayal of the passion that held me in

bondage. A power I could not cast off subdued me to stillness.

Thus we sat; thus we parted,—no sign from me; no warning to him.

We both walked on to the dark fate awaiting us.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COUSINS.

WHEN I returned to the house, Mrs. Devaseur sent for me to visit her in her chamber; her health was much broken. She received me kindly—even with something of affection—and asked me to accept as a remembrance of her, and a token of her regard for me, a ring she had herself worn before her fingers had lost their roundness,—they yet retained their fairness.

It was a costly stone. In time past I would have set a high value on the gift for its worth in money; its price was more money than I had ever possessed. A stronger passion than avarice was now master of my nature. I only valued the gift as indicative of a certain advance I had made in the estimation of these proud people.

From the very first I had secretly felt that a vast expanse lay between them and me—an expanse over which, even though they should reach hands and touch me, would not bring me to their side. An invisible, yet impassable, something seemed ever to rear itself between me and these wealthy Southerners. I never lost consciousness of the existence of this barrier. Were *they* equally conscious? I could but think they were.

During the night a steamer from New Orleans landed. I heard the clang of her bells, the blowing off of steam, the bustle and commotion, as though freight or passengers were being put off. Soon thereafter, noises in the hall below, servants running hither and thither, announced the arrival of visitors, which awoke in me little curiosity, and less interest; *I* had no friends to look for. I forgot the circumstance, and sank to sleep before quiet was restored in the house.

Next morning when I entered the breakfast room, Mr. Lynn Devaseur was in his favourite

seat, a newspaper in his hand. His mother reclined on a couch. Breakfast was not yet served, though it was past the usual hour. I observed on the table two additional plates. A servant asked Mrs. Devaseur if breakfast should be brought in.

Before she answered, a soft rustle, as of the plumes of birds, broke the quiet of the air—a sudden light illumed the room.

I was covertly, yet keenly, watching the Master of Red Leaf. His full face was visible to me. I did not turn to discover the cause of the rustle, or whence the radiance; my eyes were fixed on the Master's changing countenance.

Was he, too, falling a victim to the dread disease we had thought dissipated? Else why the extraordinary pallor of that splendid face? Whence the strange fires in those deep eyes? He was not reading—he had not been reading since I entered the room; he might deceive his mother's, but not my keen scrutiny.

As the rustling plumes disturbed the air, I

observed a certain quiver of his eyelids, as if resisting an impulse to lift themselves up. They did not lift up until his mother said to him,—

"Lynn, your cousins."

Then he rose with a slow, stately grace, all his own, gave to one cousin his hand, to the other a kiss on the cheek, and bade them welcome back to Red Leaf.

We all sat down to breakfast.

These were the originals of the portraits. Had I seen them in the furthest end of the earth, I would have known them. It was the younger, the fairer, the more roseately-coloured cousin that he kissed.

She was, indeed, exceedingly lovely. Her face and form were as the lily's for fairness and slenderness and grace. Her rose-hued robe, and rose-tinted blossoms in her tresses of fair hair, the heavenly light in her blue eyes, her scarlet lips and white teeth, all made a whole that pleased and gratified the eye as would a lovely bouquet of flowers.

This was Miss Clara Devaseur, the only daughter of Lynn's uncle. She had been an orphan since a child, had been tenderly reared by Mrs. Devaseur, and had been sent to travel in Europe under the protection of Mr. Gordon and his daughter, brother and niece of Mrs. Devaseur.

The cousin to whom the Master had given his hand, instead of a kiss, was draped in mourning; the shadow of a great grief lay on her.

She was taller by some inches than Miss Clara Devaseur, darker by some shades, older by a few years, and mountains higher in intellectual ability.

She was introduced to me as Miss Gordon; her aunt called her Gertrude.

Both ladies greeted me politely, and their aunt with affection. Miss Devaseur talked prettily and pleasantly on any subject that came up. Miss Gordon more rarely spoke; yet when she did, no one failed to listen—her tones lingered in the loving air.

It did not require a long or a keen scrutiny to determine which of these two, mentally and spiritually, was nearest of kin to Lynn Devaseur.

In the look within the eyes, in the cast of the face, in the bearing of the broad head, in the crown of high thought that seemed to encircle it, in the inexpressible sweetness lingering in the tones of her voice, Miss Gordon was as a soul-sister to the Master of Red Leaf.

The more I looked on her the lovelier she grew, the nobler appeared her nature, the higher her aspect. She was the ideal woman.

Alas! and alas! wretched beyond all others was I.

From the crown of her beautiful head to the soles of her beautiful feet, from the *alpha* to the *omega* of her moral nature, I found her without fleck or flaw.

I, her enemy—I, who hated her with a cruel hatred—I, who wrought her ruin—now that she is gone to the heaven she was fitted for; now that the worst this world could wreak upon her

was wreaked; now that the sleepless furies of Remorse, making themselves her Nemesis, have turned my all of time to torture, so that for me no worse can come—I dare to say it,—She was the ideal woman.

She was beautiful; I hated her for her beauty. She was good; I hated her for her goodness. She was noble; I hated her for her nobleness. She was white Truth, and I hated her for it.

Let no one think that, in and of themselves, these beautiful qualities were hateful in my sight.

Strange as it may seem, the more lovely they appeared, the more malignant I felt toward their possessor.

Envy—mean, malicious Envy—ever follows in the wake of open-eyed and generous Admiration. We envy that in others we have not ourselves, but would like to have. Envy as keenly sees and appreciates a beauty or an excellence as Admiration itself; yet how unlike the latter! Admiration enjoys the beauty it looks on, as much as if the beauty were its own. Envy is

always intensely selfish; it is painfully conscious of its own deficiency, and bitterly hates those more blessed. Admiration is the quality of a generous soul, Envy of the meanly selfish. Like a serpent in the heart that harbours it, Envy gnaws and never lets go, and makes a mean pain, which neither receives nor merits pity from mortal breast.

The more plainly Gertrude Gordon's symmetry and grace of being forced themselves on my perception, the more exquisite and perfect she appeared, the deeper and deadlier grew my dislike.

I remember once—this occurred some time after their return to Red Leaf—I was before the mirror arranging my hair—she suddenly stood by my side, preferring some slight request, a smile on her lips.

It was too much—the strong contrast between us. *Her* faultless face; mine pallid, plain, plebeian. Her eyes as stars; mine sunk and soulless. Her hair as the plumes of night; mine lusterless as wisps of straw. Her form as the

poet's sculptured dream; mine graceless, meagre, poor.

I was maddened by the sight—she and I, side by side. Fiercely I turned upon her; the twin serpents in my soul—Envy and Hate—leaped to life, and looked forth from the windows of my heart.

I could have stung or strangled her where she stood.

She started back, pale, astounded. She feared I had suddenly gone insane. Perhaps it was insanity. It lasted but an instant. I mastered myself; I restored the mask to my visage; I was quiet and impassive as usual. She spoke to me gently. The request she had come to prefer was mentioned no more. She said she feared I was not well; I had sat up too late, read too much, studied too much; I needed rest. She offered to relieve me in the schoolroom; she hoped she would be able to give me satisfaction as a teacher.

And I hated her the more, the more kindly she

spoke! Does any one question this statement? I record but the naked facts.

In a spiritual work recently published, we are told that mortals on earth constantly receive influxes of spirit life, as well from the deepest hells as the highest heavens of the spirit world. Have I not felt at times irresistible tides flowing in from those blackest hells, in and over my soul?

And to crown the summit of my misery—to give it the very acme of poignancy—the cruel Fate that cursed me with baseness made double the curse by giving me the keen consciousness of it.

If I hated her, I scorned myself. If I envied her for what she was, I loathed myself for what I was.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOVE.

I ASKED of myself but one question—"*Does he love her?*" That I should ask it showed insanity. Too well, too well I knew their two souls were only two halves, and must inevitably melt and mingle into one.

Love! The coarse, the commonplace—and the world is peopled with such—use the word to express the coarse and commonplace attraction they feel, the one for the other. How can the same word indicate what *he* felt for *her*—*he* the very Master of his kind; *she* his mate, his soul-sister?

How imperfect, how poor is the language of mortals! It is powerless to interpret the finer emotions of the heart, the higher thoughts of the

mind, the more exquisite sensations of the soul. I can find no word to convey to others the conception in my mind of the purity, the depth, the tenderness, the sweetness of the love a lofty nature like his would feel for a kindred nature such as hers.

"Yet," urged my insanity, "if they are lovers, confessed and accepted, why remain apart? What prevents a perfect union?"

My keen and jealous perceptions discovered there was a barrier between them, but did not divine its character. Mrs. Devaseur too truly loved her niece. I could harbour no suspicion of objection raised by her.

My feelings, already morbidly intense, became feverishly active in the endeavour to discover the nature of the barrier between them. Was it impassable? Was it of HER raising? Was it of *his?*

I left no means untried to discover the secret, to penetrate the mystery. I listened to conversations not intended for my ear; I pried into

letters not intended for my reading; I questioned the slaves; yet all things baffled me.

And sometimes I was idiot enough to say to myself, "It is only a brotherly affection."

Thrice idiot that I was! to find a strange joy in the assurance!

One day, early in the first winter month, a box of new publications arrived from the city. After the fire blazed, the lamps were lighted, the curtains drawn, the box was opened, each individual taking the first book or magazine that came to hand.

Mine was a common-place novel—I have forgotten its title—but *his*—shall I ever forget? It was a poem, "The Triumph of Time," by an English poet, Swinburne. Until that night I had not heard his name. Oh! for ever and for ever will the sight of it, or the sound of it, bring up memories that lash my soul into keener suffering.

I withdrew to an obscure corner. I affected to read the book I held in my hand. I was

watching and listening. When was I not watching and listening?

First, Mrs. Devaseur withdrew; then Miss Clara Devaseur left the room. The Master and Miss Gordon sat near the table on which burned the lamp; its full light fell on them.

I saw in their faces a sudden sense of being alone—*together*. They either were unconscious of my presence, or counted me as nobody—as a chair, or a—*I* was only the poor teacher; *they* were lifted up toward the stars.

Her eyes were bent down on the page before her; *his* were full on her face. He drew nearer to her. A slight tremor of the white lids told that she felt his coming, though she moved not, nor lifted her eyes to his. He said to her—

"*Gertrude, shall I read to you?*"

How few the words! how simple! yet what unutterable things they said! I had never dreamed of the power for expression that lay in the tones of the human voice. The exceeding and exquisite tenderness and sweetness lying

latent in the masculine voice—latent until breathed into sounds for ears beloved! What music equals it? What so surely subdues a woman's heart?

She slightly bent her head in assent, closing the book she was pretending to read, yet not lifting her eyes. Love scorns etiquette, or makes a code of its own. Her manner was far sweeter to the Master than would have been the most polished politeness.

Surely, ere this, he must have been familiar with the lines he read, for, as the music of the rhythm fell from his lips, he looked more on her downcast face than on the poet's page. And when before heard mortal ears sweeter rhythmic sounds? The south wind wooing the waters of some lone lake it loves would ripple no more musically.

But beneath the softness that stole over my soul while listening to the Master's reading, down in the core of my unhappy heart, coiled the twin serpents, Jealousy and Envy. I sat still as stone,

hearing with my ears, watching with my eyes, feeling with my heart.

Still she lifted not her eyes. Dare she not meet his? Feared she her soul would escape from its windows, and go forth to meet and mingle with his?

When, afterwards, I consulted the poem, that sad and passionate wail of an unhappy lover, I found that his reading had not been strictly according to the text. Sense, words, and thoughts were changed to suit the reader's feeling or situation.

He had need of change, *his* love being only deferred, not scorned. *His* thoughts were not as the poor poet's—

> "—— dead things wrecked and whirled
> Round and round in a gulf of the sea."

Nor had this thrice blessed Master any cause to

> "Break friends with roses, and loathe sweet tones."

Ah! no! The Master of Red Leaf's reading had in it the rapture of a love perfect and whole.

As he looked, not on the printed page, but on her fairer face, with that rapture he said—

"We will grow as the gods, or the gods in heaven,
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet—
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

"In the change of years, in the coil of things,
In the clamour and rumour of life to be,
We drinking love at the furtherest springs;
Covered with love as a covering tree
We will grow as the gods, as the gods above—
Filled from the heart to the lips with love—
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

"We will stand as the stars stand, and move
As the moon moves, loving the world; and see
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean,
Twain halves of a perfect heart made fast—
Soul to soul while the years fall past—
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine."

Did the soul within him subdue her? Did the fires in his eyes enkindle her's? Did its subtle force constrain her to lift her blue-veined lids?

As a fair evening cloud is reddened by the warm rays of the amorous sun, so up from her heart to her fair brow slowly mounted the tell-tale blood; and those two spirits, the twin halves

of one whole, met face to face, in the freshness, in the greatness, in the glory of their young love.

And a subtle power—who can blame the poets of the old world for calling it a god?—bent those two proud heads nearer and nearer to each other, until their breaths mingled, and soul sank in soul.

"*One spirit,*" murmured he, "*your soul and mine.*" I waited no more. Filled with a fierce fury, I fled from their presence.

A wild anguish wrung my heart. Then a storm of rage swept over me—a savage desire to wreak on those two ruin, death, and everlasting destruction. Was it a flimsy pretence to excuse the insane rage I felt that I told myself their exhibition of love in *my* presence was an unfeeling and insolent taunt? I went forth in the night, beneath the sullen winter sky, under the leafless trees. I said to myself:

"Insolent aristocrats! Selfish slaveholders! They flaunt their wealth of love before *my* hungry heart, as they hold up *their* worldly

riches by the side of *my* want. They lay bare their souls before me as though I were a senseless clod, a worm under their proud feet! Because I am poor, and plain, and pallid, they deem me incapable of seeing, of feeling—me the insignificant teacher!"

Ah God! what wells of bitterness broke forth in my soul! *Their* love, *my* starvation; *their* rapture, *my* suffering; *their* hope, *my* despair; *their* feast, *my* unappeasable hunger of the heart. A something like molten iron seethed around my heart, a something like sharp steel swayed before my eyes. Like Macbeth, my hand stretched forth to grip it; it was nothing—it was air. But a purpose was before me hotter than molten iron, keener than sharpened steel. Toward that fell purpose I went on without qualm or pause.

CHAPTER XIX.

LETTERS FROM HOME.

THE same boat that brought the box of books to the Master of Red Leaf brought me letters from the North, which was agitated to its heart's core. The war cloud was blowing up black and threatening. Lebanon Long, my sister Abby, and my father, each had written, and each had but one theme—War! war! war!

This state of feeling in the North was in striking contrast to the supine feeling of the South. The Gulf States had seceded, had set up an independent Government, and now rested calmly on their Right to Secession. Instead of marshalling troops, and drilling men, and gathering ammunition, the Confederate Government sent peace

commissioners to Washington to arrange an amicable settlement.

The press of the South prated confidently of the *rights* of freemen. The newspapers wanted to know how war was possible? With what sort of face, under what shadow of right, could one set of free and sovereign States assume the power of coercion over another set equally free, equally sovereign? The very basic principle of democracy, argued these blinded men, was that a people had the right to elect their own rulers and frame their own laws. This right the South had exercised. For the North to attempt coercion would be to go back to the old monarchic spirit, in which George III. had warred on the colonies, and against which our forefathers had fought so bravely.

I read and I listened to such arguments, and I laughed in my heart at the lesson I knew these men would learn from the inexorable logic of *Might*. The North was twenty million strong, the South but six; was the great and mighty

North to be hindered of its purpose by a "principle"? Was it to let the South go free when it knew it had but to stretch forth its strong hand and drag her back under the stars and stripes?

I laughed with scorn when I heard the South boast of her Rights, her Republicanism, her Democracy. *She*, who outraged the rights of four million human beings, because their skin was black!

How dared the sin-stained South appeal to the justice of the Nations? Could she lift up her unclean hands in the world's great Court, and demand a decision in her favour? *She*, with the chains clanking on her four million slaves!

What impudence to talk of her *right* to elect her own rulers, to frame her own laws; to talk of *right* in the presence of a million black men, as dumb as the dumb cattle they tended, as voiceless in the election of *their* rulers as the dogs and horses and horned beasts of the plantation!

Only the Master had the clear vision to look

on this subject from *this*, its Northern aspect, and I saw it was gall and wormwood to him. A great sadness gathered and settled on his thoughtful face. Day by day I saw the sadness deepen; only I knew the cause. His subtle and fine judgment, his almost clairvoyant eyes pierced beyond the present into the future—and there he only saw the most melancholy pictures.

This was my first letter from my father since I had left his roof, so strong had been his resentment at my leaving. At first his coldness—his neglect—wounded me, I was so far from home, from all earlier association, and there were so few to care for me. Had he shown even a small regard or interest in my welfare, absence would have softened the asperities of memory. But his sullen silence (I had twice written to him), had hardened me into utter indifference. And now, when once more I saw his well-known writing, it was more with surprise than pleasure that I opened the missal. Nor was the pleasure increased by the perusal. His letter was like

himself—true to the whole tenor of his life—hard, fault-finding, dictatorial.

He wanted to know what I was doing for the cause I was elected to serve? As yet, no fruits of good service had been shown to the society that sent me a missionary to labour for the Lord, and the Lord's people. Was the sloth of the Southerner infectious? Was the climate fatal to high moral ideas? Had I succumbed to the moral, or the miasmatic malaria that scourged the Southern States? or was I calloused in heart by the constant sight of suffering. As yet no evidence had been received by the society which employed me, that even one shackled being had obtained the glorious boon of freedom by my agency.

How different had been the result when Lebanon Long had been sent a missionary to the South! Through his indefatigable efforts, three black men had escaped from thraldom by the "Underground Railroad," and had safely reached the land of freedom. He feared the society was

chagrined, and dissatisfied, and looked on the money vested in my outfit as a profitless venture.

Then he gloomily descanted on the war about to burst on the land. None could foresee its end. For inscrutable purposes the Almighty might humiliate the North; the South might prove victorious. Julius had joined a company, and was drilling daily. God had seen fit to try him (my father) sorely in the conduct of his children. Two had abandoned him to live lives of ease and luxury; one, alas! was yet sunk in sin. He thanked his Heavenly Father his prayers in behalf of his only son had reached the Throne of Grace. God had put it in the heart of his son to turn from his evil ways, to give himself to the service of his country.

Finally, father concluded by advising me to return home if I could not be of service in the South, as there surely would be bloody scenes enacted. At any moment the slaves might rise and wreak an awful vengeance on the white race.

Lebanon Long's letter was scarcely more satisfactory. I felt he was dissatisfied with what I had done. How little they understood the material of which these Red Leaf negroes were composed! How little could they comprehend the difficult task of arousing men to do and dare for Freedom, when they were lapped in a listless indolence.

"May the Lord bless and sustain you" (he wrote), "under the trials and dangers that encompass you. I know something of the difficulties that environ you. I, too, have sojourned in the slaveholding South. I know what it is to have spies dog your steps and tyrants watch your every movement. Bear up, my sister! Our prayers nightly go up to the Throne of Grace in your behalf. A better time is coming. The spirit of John Brown is marching on—on—on; aye! and will march on, until legions of brave spirits march on in his wake to fight the battles of Freedom! Your opportunities are great, my dear sister; use them *well*, but *warily*. You may always trust the field negroes, but not always those about the house. These latter are often demoralized by the influence of their white masters, as courtiers are demoralized by kings. What court favourite ever struck for freedom? *Prepare the minds of the black men for the*

coming of their friends. Lift up their fainting spirits, strengthen their drooping souls.

"And you, oh, my sister in the Lord! turn your face toward the great North, where beat twenty million hearts full of a righteous wrath against the cruel oppressor, and listen for the blast of war which will presently blow so loud that every nation on the earth will hear it, and Tyranny tremble on his throne. Glorious will be that day when we can say to our enemy, 'We have thee on the hip!' Aye! on hip and thigh will we smite them with great slaughter. The God of Battles will uphold our banners. 'For I will deliver them into thy hand,' saith the Lord. 'Not a man shall stand before thee. They and their children, and their children's children, shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the people of the Lord.' So mote it be. Amen, and amen!

"LEBANON LONG."

Though full of the thought of war, Abby's letter took a different tone from either father's or Mr. Long's. Abby adjured me to come home. She was full of prophetic fears. The South was accursed of God; God would give it up to destruction; if I did not flee I would share the general wrath. The Southern people were sleeping over a volcano: its fires were smouldering,

but would ere long burst out in flames and spread ruin and death abroad. The slaves were seething with suppressed vengeance: *they* were the volcano. As soon as the armies in the North moved on toward the South, the blacks would slip their shackles, slay their masters, masters' wives and children, and raise the banner of freedom. Abby ended by a wail over the woes to come. Red-handed Retribution would play high tragedy in the South, and I must flee from the wrath that was surely coming.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SLAVE'S PUNISHMENT.

WITH these letters in my pocket, rasped as I had been by their contents, fired by the fierce jealousy and hate that sprang to life at the sight of those two souls which had blended into one splendid spirit, I fled their presence—fled into the night, beneath the leaden sky, under the leafless trees.

The air was raw and chill; fitful gusts of wind went moaning among the branches, swaying the moss that draped them like mourning weeds—moaning and wailing in unison with my wrung soul.

Heedless whither my feet carried me so that they carried me away—away from the sight that had maddened me—I found myself straying by the side of the small stream on whose margin

were ranged the negro cabins. The inmates were not yet gone to bed. Chatter, and songs, and jocund sounds came out on the sombre air, torturing my impatient nerves. I hurried past, and on toward the silent grove in which was the hospital, all vacant now. Was it the ghost of the sweeter hours I had known in that hospital that lured me thither—lured me now in my most wretched mood? Or did its silence, its tenantless solitude, its shadow and gloom, give promise of harmony with my hopeless heart?

It was not until I had turned the corner of the building, going toward the front entrance, that I saw in the room used as a bath-room a gleam of light. The door was partially open. I heard the sound of blows and the cry for mercy. I went up to the window and looked in.

The sight, the sound, stirred my anti-slavery blood. All the hereditary philanthropy of my race rose in my heart, and for the moment submerged my more selfish passions.

The overseer—a word legitimated in the South

—was whipping a negro man. I believe I have mentioned this man, the overseer. He was a small person, nervous and resolute, with a quick, sharp eye. The negroes held him in fear. The man suffering this castigation was One-eyed Sampson, called for short Big Sam.

The contrast between the stature, the physical build, of the two men, taken in consideration with their relative position, was indeed striking.

The whipper and the whipped!—the former a pigmy, the latter a giant. The whipper a Lilliputian, the whipped a Brobdignagian!

The negro was coal black, and over six feet, tall and strong as a Hercules. He was naked to his waist, the muscles in his black arms stood up like cords, his black breast was broad and full, his black shoulders like a Vulcan's. The features of his face were of the most marked African type, the lips thicker than is usually seen, the nose flatter. His one eye was of a dead and lightless black, the white part being inflamed and red. The wool on his huge head stood out

in small spikes; the spikes were made by wrapping tufts of wool tightly with twine, a fashion much followed by plantation negroes.

Not only did the great size and strength of this negro strike the beholder, but his costume was peculiar and in keeping with his barbaric appearance. In my rambles about the fields and forest I had often met One-eyed Sampson, and had never known him to wear any article but shirt and trousers. He was usually bare-footed, and the sleeves of his shirt were worn rolled up to his shoulders, exposing the brawny arm with its corded muscles.

A certain amount of clothing was dealt to the slaves twice each year, winter and summer garments, shoes and socks. One-eyed Sampson's apparel was of the scantiest sort, suggesting the suspicion that his half-civilised nature rebelled at the burden of clothes. I learned that his practice was to trade his shoes and socks to his fellow-slaves for some luxury his palate craved—a pig, or a fat 'possum, he preferred to shoes and socks.

This was the man who stood naked to the waist, making a patient post of his strong body for the keen lash to light on!

And who was the man wielding the lash? True, he had muscle, and sinew, and nerve, but how small he seemed by the side of the black!

Why did not that African Hercules seize his tormentor and rend him to pieces? or dash him to the earth as he would have flung a serpent coming to sting?

How easily he could have done it! The white man was armed only with a whip; there were none near to have aided or upheld his tyranny. What withheld that negro—what but the white skin of the man who wielded the whip? The black giant made no resistance, no remonstrance; his monotonous cry, "Oh, Lord! mas'er, yes, sir! Oh, Lord! mas'er, yes, sir!" made a refrain to the lashes' tune, an accompaniment to the white man's performance, not a prayer for his mercy.

How many stripes had been given before I arrived, I could not conjecture; I counted twenty.

Then the overseer threw down his whip, saying shortly,

"There, you rascal! you'll catch it again if you don't look sharp!"

And his gigantic victim humbly responded,

"Yes, sir."

The overseer went away. I wondered what were the secret feelings of this man and brother. Received he this torture in the saintly spirit with which our Saviour taught us to turn the other cheek when one is smitten? Breathed his heart that charitable prayer, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do"?

Or, did his great heart—great if proportioned to his body—burn with high thoughts of freedom, of vengeance on his cruel oppressor?

Ah! why had he not taken death rather than the degraded lash?

Oh, spirit of the martyred John Brown! gave you your sacred life to bring freedom to such as these? I resolved to begin work with renewed zeal, to fire the hearts of these abused slaves. I

waited and watched at the window, intending to go in and talk to One-eyed Sampson as soon as he had made his toilet, or, to speak more literally, put on his shirt.

His first act, after the overseer left, was to plunge his huge fist deep into his capacious pocket, and bring thence—no, not the knife, or dagger, or pistol, my indignant soul expected—but a plug of tobacco, from whence he bit a mouthful and began to chew. Then he thrust his spikey head in his shirt, and proceeded to draw it over his body. At this moment a newcomer appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XXI.

PREACHER JIM.

THE new-comer was a negro, but not a Devaseur slave. Preacher Jim, as I have stated, belonged to the Pickard plantation. He was the same whose character had been discussed by the masters on the moon-lighted hospital-piazza. Bearing in mind what I heard that night, I looked at this negro with a new and keen scrutiny. He was unlike One-eyed Sampson, almost the reverse in minor characteristics, yet of full and unadulterated African blood. His skin was not as coal-black as Sampson's. It was ashy and brown-black. His wool was short, and so tightly kinked as to lie flat over his skull like a cap made of felt, and was of a dingy red hue,

not glossy black, like Sam's. He was small, wiry, and subtle in appearance. His little eyes, quick and cunning, reminded me of a serpent's.

Preacher Jim peeped in at the door with an air of great caution, then, apparently satisfied with the situation, entered and went up to Big Sam, who by this time had his head with its spikes well above his shirt. Jim's first words were to ask for a "chaw of bacca." The "chaw" was given. The preacher then asked the giant, "What was he up to?"

"You see, Jim," replied Big Sam, rolling his reddened eye on the preacher, with a sort of dull slyness, "You see, de oberseer *he* kotch me wid a hog."

"Who hog dat?" queried Jim.

"Who hog? Mas Lynn hog. I was a-fotchin' dat hog to de flat-boat down at de landin'. Dat boatman he goine give me a gallon o' whisky for dat hog, 'sides six plugs o' 'bacca."

"You's a 'tarnal fool, Sampson! *Dats* what

you is!" said Preacher Jim, with great scorn. "What for you start to dat boat wid dat hog in de first part o' de night for? Why'nt you hab sense 'nuff to wait till de oberseer done gone to bed and soun' asleep?"

"I's goine do dat nex' time, *sho!*" answered the giant, compunction in his tones.

"When dat ar nex' time?" spoke up the preacher, eagerly. "When dat ar nex' time? Lem *me* know, Sam; I'll be 'long dar; I'll dodge dat ar oberseer, *you bet!* Jim's up to oberseers, *you bet!* Der ain't no oberseer in de lan' ken kotch dis nigger. You'll go sheers in dat whisky and 'bacca, Sam?"

This conversation grated on me as not consonant with what should have been their feelings under the circumstances. I resolved at once to begin my work. I had hitherto been remiss; henceforth I would earnestly devote every opportune moment to the great work of educating these down-trodden men to a higher phase of life.

I went directly up to them. I told them I was their friend. I was from the great North, which loved the black race, and hated their white and cruel masters. I told them a great war was about to break out; the Northern people were determined to set the slaves in the South free; that I was a missionary to their people to prepare their minds for the reception of our liberating army when it should arrive. I showed them their *right* to freedom, to equality with their oppressors. I bade them spread these glad tidings from one plantation to another, until every heart was fired with patriotism and panted for freedom, and every man was ready to lay down his life in the struggle for liberty.

I talked earnestly and eloquently. I think even my father would have commended me could he have heard. Had every black man in the South been thus fervently addressed, surely the negro race would have risen to a man, declared its right to freedom, and worked out its own salvation, saving thereby the lives of five

hundred thousand brave boys in blue, who so nobly fell a sacrifice on the altars of African freedom.

In Preacher Jim I found an apt scholar, an ardent advocate of negro freedom and equality. I felt convinced his zeal, faith, and vehement powers of speech would now be put to good and efficient use.

I had for some time been a teacher in the negro Sunday School. It was well understood by the white masters that their slaves were not to receive what they called "*book* learning." Mrs. Devaseur and the two young ladies were Catholics in faith, and very earnest in desiring their slaves to be instructed *orally* in the tenets and duties of religion. The Catechism was taught orally: it was not deemed necessary to salvation that negroes should know how to read. For some time only children were under my instruction. One by one, adult men and women came to listen to my lessons, until at length I fell into the habit of teaching them also. Into these

mature but benighted minds I seized every safe opportunity to sow the seeds of earnest thought. I impressed on them the utility of letters. I showed them how much easier to find the way to freedom it would be if they only knew how to read and write. Among the most eager to learn was Preacher Jim, the Pickard slave, whose character I had heard so unfavourably represented by his young master. Jim besought me to give him instruction: his highest ambition, he said, was to read the Bible. Although Jim confidently stated this, "his folks (meaning his white owners) never keend how much larnin' *he* got," I refused to become his teacher unless a way was opened to perfect secrecy and safety. I knew well with what distrust a New England philanthropist would be viewed by Southern slaveholders.

On no question affecting the negro could the Southerner and the New Englander agree.

The Southerner had no faith in the beneficial effect of letters, except for the white race. He

argued that the negro was really better off without book-education. The ground for this argument was the statement put forth as fact, that the negro race were at this period in about the same mental condition the white race was in the pre-historic age.

"Of what avail," the Southern man asked confidently, "would modern schools have been to our ancestors thousands of years ago, when they dressed in skins and lived in caves? The first processes of a savage people's education," he said, "naturally grow out of the necessities of life. Before barbarians need books they must learn habits of industry, of forethought, of self-denial. *Want* is the teacher that whips them to exertion. Suffering spurs them to forethought. Every civilised race on the globe has gone through this hard school; if the African is to attain civilisation, he cannot escape it. The Southern whites are rushing their slaves through the severe discipline of industry, of self-denial, of self-government." "The abolitionists of the North," said

an arrogant Southerner in my hearing, "are strangely inconsistent. They assert that we of the South hold down the slave's intellect; they seem to fancy the negroes of the South would develope into statesmen, and poets, and philosophers, if only allowed to rise. Can they not realise, how infinitely superior the negroes of America are to the negroes of Africa? The former, for three hundred years have been forced to practice habits of industry, have been taught the tenets of Christianity, have been estopped on every side and at every point from indulging their savage inclinations for laziness, and, as far as practicable, their strong savage passions and desires. Our negroes are a thousand times more mild, more pacific, more industrious, more thoughtful of the future, than the negroes they left behind in Africa. This difference is due to the system of training to which American negroes have been subjected. Nor are they yet ready to receive the education of the schools."

"No," added the Professor, who was present, "and will not be for fifty years to come."

Yet this Professor was himself a native of New England, and should have been ashamed of his narrow-minded doctrine. Association with these selfish people had demoralised him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE YELPING OF THE DOGS OF WAR.

THE scene I had last witnessed between the Master and Miss Gordon struck away the few slight straws my sinking hopes had clutched, and these hopes went down in a dark whirlpool of despair. Oh, had they sunk forever out of sight and sound! But this was not to be. Some fateful devil swirled them up from the bottom, and dashed them fiercely about in my o'ercharged soul, until a dreadful desire possessed me like a demon—a desire to wreak on my rival, on her land and people, something of the suffering they had wreaked on me.

Already a mighty Revenge was taking form and shape. It was swooping down from the great

North. Its black wings reached from the east to the west. It overshadowed the land.

The name of this monster was—WAR.

Though its trumpet had not yet sounded, *I* listened for it. *I* knew it must blow a blast that would marshal millions to the fray.

I knew the implacable spirit of old John Brown was marching on—on! viewless but wrathful, silent but vengeful!

Although not yet were the dogs of war loosed from their leashes, *I* heard their fierce yelping; with *clair-audient* ears *I* drank in the music of the sound—with *clair-voyant* eyes *I* saw their open jaws and hanging tongues, hungry for the human blood they snuffed afar off.

State after State in the doomed South seceded. Idiots that they were! Instead of preparing for war, they hugged the hope of peace, and sent commissioners to negotiate terms of peace! One shrewd man in Washington fooled them to the top of their bent—talked peace and prepared for war!

War? Every letter that came to me from the

North breathed war! war to extermination, to—*save the Union!*

This was the cry raised. It was thought a more potent cry with the great masses than *Free the negro!* Though anti-slavery was the germ, the animus of the war, it was deemed politic to submerge it under the "*Save the Union*" idea.

When the American people were severed from their legitimate King who occupied the throne of England, and ruled by the divine right of Kings, the feeling of loyalty was transferred from a flesh and blood monarch to an ideal one, called the UNION. Union means a harmony—a oneness. The atomic parts of several or of two things are attached to each other, and melt into one whole. This is Union. No ligatures binding two antagonistic wholes together make a union. Love of the atomic parts is the only power that can create unions. Alas! who does not know how, for years before the war between the North and the South, the Union was shivered, if it ever had existed? Who does not know how discord,

distrust, dislike, fear, hate, had divided the States long before the war-blast blew? Bayonets now fix them together, but is this *Union?*

Have shot and shell, cavalry and cannon, power to dissipate discord, drive away fear, and turn hate to love? Do not these passions seethe the deeper because over them presides a gigantic hypocrisy which persists in calling the most unconquerable centrifugal forces by the sweet name—UNION?

Yet for this name, so long a fraud, it was pretended that the war was waged.

Franker, more honest it would have been, and far more creditable, had the Northern States fearlessly proclaimed the great humanitarian doctrine, "*Death to slavery,*" and rested the war on that idea. This would have forced the better class of Southern men to the real issue, Slavery or its downfall. Many would have shrunk from staking life and all for the perpetuity of a disgraceful evil. Those Southerners who would not have fought to maintain slavery fought for the

right to secede. They claimed the same right to secede from the North that the colonies had to secede from Britain. And the North claimed the same right to whip them back into the Union that England had claimed to whip back the colonies.

Putting the war on the basis of the Union, the South was in the right; putting it on the basis of death to slavery, the North was right.

The North knew it was right, yet distrusted the great masses. Would they have rushed to war to free the negro as quickly as to save the Union? In every preliminary move the North outwitted the South. It fired the Northern heart by "*Save the Union!*" yet made the South odious by representing to the world that it was fighting for the perpetuity of slavery! The South sued for peace, ardently longed for peace, yet the North cunningly made it appear to the world that the South began the war.

Peace! Never! until she lay humbled at the feet of the conquering North! Never! until her

hellish institution was wiped from the face of the earth! A hundred times never! War until the power, the pride, the property of these slave aristocrats were swept from them.

Should any one ask why *I*, Hester Stanhope, felt such hot resentment toward the Southern slaveholders—what had they done to *me* that I should feel so keenly?—I answer, there are wrongs more bitter to bear than blows, insults more galling than any words can describe.

I never looked on Gertrude Gordon but the sense of wrong raged in my heart. Every grace of her beautiful being wounded me as a wrong. Every charm of her perfect person goaded me as an outrage. The delicacy, the whiteness of her hand was an insult. Could I help but contrast it with mine, the coarse contour of which was inherited from a line of labouring ancestry, as the exquisite fineness of hers was descended from progenitors whose toiling slaves had saved them from all manual and mean employment? The possession of slaves had given her leisure to

acquire and cultivate those courtly graces, for the destitution of which *we* were despised.

Is it any wonder we hated slavery? Is it any wonder when the war blast blew it filled us with a fierce joy?

We felt that the days of these slave-aristocrats were numbered: they would fall to *our* level of labour. And of all the loyal hearts that longed for this fall, mine longed most intensely.

As I looked on that ideal woman, Gertrude Gordon—the perfect embodiment of elegance, of beauty, of goodness, of intelligence—I said to myself, with a secret joy—

"Her delicate hands shall become acquainted with toil—they shall harden and roughen as mine. Her proud feet shall forget their pride, and step down from high places to walk in the mud and mire of poverty, through which *I* have walked all my life. From her queenly head shall fall its invisible coronet; its circlet of thoughts will vanish—high thoughts take flight from the daily drudge."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SCHOOL-HOUSE IN THE MOUND.

MANY things combined to renew and refire my oft-flagging philanthropy for the down-trodden negro. I said to myself, "It shall fill me to the exclusion of all else." I said, "Strong resolve shall divert into that channel the river of my thoughts, my feelings, from the unhappy love that has so long swept over me like a torrent."

I had agreed to teach Preacher Jim to read, and he was to teach his fellow-slaves. How this could be done in secrecy was the question. Jim had the matter in consideration, and in time reported a successful solution. In the unfrequented forest that skirted the great sugar-cane field, on the margin of a dried-up stream, now thickly grown up with underbrush, brambles, and

wild cane, was a large mound of earth, supposed to have been built by the race of people that preceded the Indians found in America when white men invaded it. There are many of these mounds in the States bordering on the Mississippi. On the Pickard plantation was one much larger than this. The Pickard mound was a show place to which visitors were taken, and on which pic-nic parties were held. A good carriage road led to it. The huge forest trees which grew on it made it a pleasant and picturesque spot.

As a curiosity, the Red Leaf mound was entirely overshadowed by the Pickard. The forest trees growing on the top and sides of both gave evidence of the antiquity of these relics of a bygone race.

On Sunday morning, while I was teaching the class of negro children the Catholic Catechism, Preacher Jim came up and mysteriously whispered in my ear,

"De school-hus' all ready, missus!"

"The school-*house?*" answered I, somewhat

startled at the idea. "Don't you know I durst not teach in a school-house?"

Jim winked at me with infinite cunning, and said, still in a whisper,

"You knows dat moun' down in de dried-up creek?"

"Yes, I know that mound."

"Dis evenin', you jes follows de trail what goes to dat moun'. I'll be 'long dar, and 'duct you to de scrimptionist school-hus you ever laid eyes on. *Min'!*"

With this injunction, enforced by his inevitable wink, Jim went away.

In my rambles over the Red Leaf grounds, I had more than once strayed to the mound. There was no house, or cabin, or shanty near it, or in that direction. If Jim had built any such structure with the expectation that I would teach him in it, he would be disappointed. Detection would be inevitable, and ruin result to me.

After dinner I started on the narrow path that

led through the woods, which Jim had called the "trail." I walked on two miles before I saw anything of him. When in sight of the mound he suddenly came from behind a tree and joined me. His little eyes, full of triumphant cunning, twinkled with glee as he pointed to the mound with its lofty trees, and stuttered,

"Da—d—dar de school-hus'!"

Seeing no sign of a house, I began to think Jim demented, and looked from the mound to his chuckling face with a sort of fear creeping over me. The trail, or narrow foot-path, was on the margin of the bramble-choked bed of the dried creek.

Jim looked all around him with an air of great caution, put his ear to the ground and listened. Apparently satisfied that we were in an unbroken solitude, he lifted aside a matted mass of brambles and cane and went down into the bed of the creek. The cane was ten feet tall; it formed a wall on both sides of us, as we made our way in a very narrow path laid with dried

leaves. Jim had closed the entrance to this path, which seemed to shut us out from the world around, so dense was the growth of the wild cane.

In a very short time we came to a great oval opening into the side of the earth. I looked up and saw it was a hole in the mound. Jim went in, I followed. For ten or twelve feet there was light enough clearly to see objects, further back was dusk and shadow. It was a long vaulted chamber. The walls were smooth save in spots where the cement had crumbled away.

I could but conclude that this was an ancient sepulchre of the race that once peopled America. Jim assured me no soul but himself and One-eyed Sampson knew of its existence. Jim had discovered it in one of his runaway trips. It had served as a secure and safe hiding-place when he chose to shirk work.

He struck a match, and, lighting a pine torch, held it so that I could survey the strange scene. I went to its extreme end, and guessed it was

about twenty-five feet long by nine wide. Great piles of earth were heaped up here and there, the result of Jim's industry. He had dug in search of treasure, but found nothing he valued, neither gold nor silver ornaments. The things he did find he deemed utterly without interest, and had piled them pell-mell along the wall. These were curiosities to me. There were several human skulls, one with all the grinning teeth yet in it, other skulls with the teeth more or less dropped out. There were thigh bones, and arm bones, and ribs thrown in a white heap. There were four or five small earthen pots, rudely fashioned, and shaped very like our common cook-pots. Two of these pots were half full of human teeth, molars and front, all white and strong as when, ages ago, they tore the flesh from the bones of the forest beasts snared or shot for food.

Jim had found these teeth in the dirt he dug. There was one utensil of finer fashion than the pots. It seemed to have been made of the same material that cemented the walls of the sepulchre.

It was of a dirty whitish colour, hard and smooth as stone, circular in shape, with saucer-like spaces on both sides. In these saucers were plainly visible specks of bright red, blue, and yellow. A pestle of the same stuff showed this must have been a paint-pot, probably once the property of a distinguished medicine man, or renowned chief.

And these earth-heaps scattered at distant intervals over America, with their skulls and teeth, their arm and leg bones, their pots and pestles, are all the record left of a people once lords of the land.

It was arranged that once every week, on Sunday evening, I should come to this unique school-room, and teach Preacher Jim the art of reading.

END OF VOL. I.

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